



DULVERTON

A CASE

STUDY OF

PARTICIPATORY

BUDGETING



**YOUR
LOCAL
BUDGET**



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INTRODUCTION

Dulverton is a pioneer area in the Your Local Budget project, a project exploring how communities can be engaged in local spending decisions.

Your Local Budget is being delivered by the Big Society Network and NESTA in association with the PB Unit.

For more information about Dulverton and the other areas taking part in this project visit www.yourlocalbudget.org

Contact details

For more information about participatory budgeting in Dulverton, please contact:

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THE DULVERTON PILOT

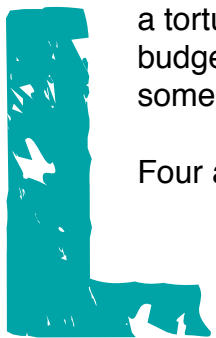
Dulverton has held two major public events and a large number of smaller meetings in the last two years.

Dulverton is an isolated rural Market Town hub, serving surrounding villages with a total population of 4,500, swelled by tourism in the summer. It is the gateway to Exmoor, both idyllic and high on a number of indices of deprivation.

Participatory Budgeting began with a Parish Plan involving a large number of community activists led by the Town Council Chairman.

When Total Place was introduced nationally Dulverton Town Council calculated that nine public authorities (see Appendix 1 page 13) spend £10 million per annum on a population of 1,500 people – £6,600 for every child, woman and man in the parish.

When CLG, PBU, and CRC were seeking rural communities to experiment with participatory budgeting in what had up to now in England been a largely urban activity, Dulverton applied to be one of the four, with Hampton Bishop (Herefordshire), The Isle Of Wight, and Bassetlaw.



Dulverton decided that although it would begin with the more common PB grant giving process, it would seek to involve mainstream partners from the outset. This was a fifteen month process of negotiations, occasionally in partnership meetings, but mostly individually with officers and/or members of the nine authorities. It was often a tortuous process requiring education, materials and information about participatory budgeting, why and how it works, with eager commitment offered immediately by some (the Health Service), others eventually, or not at all (the County Council).

Four authorities contributed £15,000, with four others offering support in kind.

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'SENSIBLE SPENDING' REPORT

60 people, in a snowbound town, listened to 18 bids for some of the funds available, 13 of which were successful, others combining or withdrawing. An innovative, cohesive voting process was introduced. There are requests for a repeat of this experience (see Appendix 2 for a comprehensive report of this event, pages 14 to 33).

Shortly afterwards a government grant of £34,000 was used to lead a PB 'planning for real' type exercise with 40 children and 20 adults designing a new play and recreation area between the school, social housing, and a planned new estate. This was similar to the method piloted in East Devon for PB Section 106 Agreements with sport, play and community engagement. When the new government was elected the grant was frozen for six months. £20,000 subsequently emerged which has to be spent within 10 weeks, a difficult timetable for continuing and ensuring engagement and participation. The Town Council has added £6,000 from its local precept for younger children.

The experience of Sensible Spending added to an already keen appetite for more local management of resources and budgets. The Dulverton Town Council has localism (YLB) on its regular agenda.



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LOCALISM

The Town has 72 facilities (shops, small businesses, etc but excluding a large number of entrepreneurs who work from home). 24 public facilities are owned or managed by local people (see Appendix 3 page 34). The Town Council also manages 13 other facilities (see Appendix 4 page 35).

Of these it has leased the three car parks from the District Council for 15 years. As well as keeping parking charges the lowest in Somerset, the Town Council makes a profit of £10,000 per year for the local community.



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'YOUR LOCAL BUDGET' (YLB)

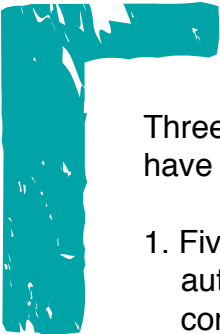
While the Town Council was considering how to take the next steps with community budgeting, a new Government, County and District Councils changed political control:

- The Coalition Govt is keen to promote the kind of localism Dulverton has been practising.
- The County Council decided to make cuts of £43 million including Dulverton's Recycling Centre, Youth Club, Library, and cutting local funding for highways and environment, including the eight parish, co-operative scheme for a Parish Lengthsman. Bus services are also to be cut. Discovering County Council budget information has proved impossible.
- The District Council, which supported Sensible Spending from the outset, and is partially committed to devolution, decided, as part of its cost savings, to take back the car parks into central management and possibly link increased charging with the County's centralised Civil Parking Enforcement plan, if that is introduced.

The Dulverton Town Council at the same time was producing a paper proposing a localised management of traffic in order to sustain the community, local business, enterprise, and tourism (see Appendix 5 page 36).



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Three very small issues, which are almost certainly repeated in other local contexts, have also emerged during the YLB investigations:

1. Five different grass cutting contracts for the town are issued by five different authorities; machinery is brought from 20 and 30 miles away by different contractors to cut neighbouring areas of grass, which could be managed by one person locally
2. The District Council spends £3,000 a year to make round trips of 40 miles to collect £300 from the toilets which the Town Council, in the interests of tourism, would make free if they were locally managed
3. Three separate inspections are carried out quarterly by three different authorities, all monitoring the same standards and issues at the Recycling Centre.

Recent YLB meetings have been held with District and County Councils, Youth Service, Somerset Waste Partnership, Police, Fire and Rescue etc. All of the YLB participants are volunteers, meeting in their own time, with paid professionals. It is questionable how long the community champions can keep up this intense level of activity. The YLB project has been seeking a secondee, including offering local accommodation, from the Government Offices in the South West, and the RDA, without success to date.



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YLB PUBLIC MEETING

The result of these changes has produced a month of Dulverton Town Council planning processes leading to a YLB event attended by 298 local people, 80 more who could not gain access to the hall, from 754 households, who voted to increase the precept by £11, on average, per household, and to award grants to:

- Play and Recreation £6205 to cover the £14k lost in Govt grant, and to match the £20k to be spent on new equipment by the end of March
- The youth club £3500
- Undergrounding cables £2500 to boost the £100k grant
- A swimming pool cover at the school £2000 to add to the £5k parents are raising
- The hospital car £500
- Equipment to keep grounds tidy £600.



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ACTION GROUPS

Four volunteer Action Groups were appointed to progress plans for the local management of the library, the recycling centre, the youth club, and the car parks. These activities generated considerable publicity including ITV and two BBC crews spending the day in town with local people. Among the views expressed to them was a frustration at the amount of money wasted by the larger authorities on what was seen as meaningless consultations, producing neither participation nor engagement.



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THE NEXT STEPS

The YLB project is seeking funding from a range of sources and authorities, asset transfers, and is firmly engaged in mainstreaming participatory budgeting on a wide front.

There are plans for another follow-up local assembly as part of the YLB programme in the Spring. It is also likely that a grantmaking PB event will be organised in the autumn.

Dulverton Town Council has engaged CLG's barrier busting team in its traffic management and youth club budgeting proposals.

Local young people, "Hear Exmoor Youth", led the campaign to maintain the recycling centre.

Seven local people involved in Sensible Spending and YLB submitted evidence to the Commons Select Committee on Localism an at the end of January (Submission: Appendix 6 page 39).

The Pilot also has support from "Localism and participatory budgeting in the South West" development group, consisting of 12 authorities.



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APPENDICES



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APPENDIX 1

The nine public authorities serving Dulverton:

- Fire and Rescue
- Police
- Health
- Housing
- National Park
- County Council
- District Council
- Community Council
- Town Council



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APPENDIX 2

‘Sensible Spending’ Report

Dulverton and West Somerset’s Participatory Budgeting pilot.

Introduction

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is worldwide, practised in over 300 cities. It has mostly been adopted in urban areas. The Commission for Rural Communities decided to test the idea in rural areas. Dulverton, Hampton Bishop (Herefordshire), Bassetlaw (Notts), and the Isle of Wight were chosen as pilots. It subsequently emerged, of course, that Cornwall, East Devon, South Somerset, Cumbria, Norfolk and North Wales were also conducting similar experiments which are now networked with this Somerset pilot.

PB began in Brazil in 1989, after the fall of the dictatorship, in order to maximise local people’s knowledge, skill, ideas and experience for the most effective and efficient delivery of public services. It was brought to England in 2000 by Church Action on Poverty and has been successfully implemented in over 100 authorities seeking to build more cohesive communities and bring public services closer to the people who use them.

PB fits very closely with the new Coalition’s aspirations for localism and the Big Society. A nationwide strategy was introduced by the last Labour administration, which has been taken up by more Conservative and Lib Dem authorities than any others. One advantage of small, rural PB schemes is that parish councils are seen to be less party political, less adversarial.



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Mainstreaming and Grant schemes

PB activities usually fit one of two models.

1. Grant schemes have been the most popular, mainly because they are easier to organise, where a small amount of a public service budget is allocated to a village, neighbourhood or ward to spend on local priorities. Examples include:

1. The Isle of Wight: children from local schools tackling local health problems
2. Dudley: over 50s groups proposing activities to keep active and socially engaged
3. Hampton Bishop: parish newsletters, and litter bins put in the most appropriate places
4. Devonport: environmental improvements for the whole community
5. East Devon: Section 106 Planning Gain funds used to make play provision in small towns.

2. Mainstreaming programmes, on the other hand, set out to ask local people what their priorities are for public budgets where some flexibility may be available in how these are spent eg under- grounding cables or improved lighting? Village hall or play park improvements? Mental health support or a hospital car service? Mainstreaming PB draws on local knowledge and helps the public to understand the sometimes difficult decisions which have to be made. The increased participation also tells local councillors what their constituents most want, local knowledge about where problems exist and how to solve them, often more cheaply, and involves local people doing more for their communities, themselves and each other.



This has been one of the major successes of PB – reduced dependence on public services coupled with increased local initiative and control. Public budgets are finite – who wouldn't seek to spend them more effectively and sensibly?

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'Sensible Spending' in Dulverton attempted, and partially succeeded with, a combination of both approaches - mainstreaming and grant giving. Nine public authorities spend more than £10,000,000 each year on the 1,500 population, almost £6,600 for every child, woman and man in the parish. Mistakes are made, opportunities missed, and money wasted by the separate targets which each of the nine authorities has to meet.



**9 public authorities spent £10,000,00 here each year.
Population 1,500
£15,000 allocated by three partners**

There are no villains in these services. It is simply that the people closest to the problems are either not involved in the solutions, don't know how to be, or don't have the time. Priorities set in Williton, Taunton, Bristol or Westminster are not always the most effective locally. Sustainable communities can be fed by a return to local solutions to local problems.

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Dulverton's Public Authorities

Developing Dulverton's PB scheme began in December 2008. The National Park provided a meeting place. The NHS offered £5,000 immediately for local people to contribute to increased public health. The Town Council took the lead and linked Dulverton's scheme - to be called "Sensible Spending" - to the Parish Plan, supported by the Community Council. The police offered their support and organised meetings with Borough Commanders. The District Council pledged £7,500 for economic development. The County Council and the West Somerset LSP held meetings and liked the idea. The Fire and Rescue Service offered staff support and an exhibition. The National Park provided maps. Magna Housing donated £500. The Town Council, as well as providing all the volunteer hours to deliver PB in the parish, produced excellent publicity, an infrastructure, Town Hall bookings, and £2,500.



Dulverton's Parish Plan Results
£15,000 to spend
 An invitation - we would like to hear from you

Sensible Spending
 We are giving money away!

Come and chat about how you would like the money spent - on Friday 19th Feb 2-9pm and Saturday 20th Feb 10am-4pm at Dulverton Town Hall...
 ... then vote for the best ideas at 2pm on the Saturday - and don't forget it's also the £100 prize draw!

Do come along, refreshments included.

Apply for a share of £15,000
 £15m is spent in Dulverton alone, each year, providing public services - police, health, education, waste etc - £5,000 for every man, woman and child.

The Town Council, District Council, NHS, Somerset and the Parish Plan Group are inviting local organisations and groups to apply for a share of £15,000 in such a way as to improve local services, facilities and activities.

How to apply
 Ring Leslie Edwards to find out how to apply on 01388 341 424 or pick up an application form from the Post Office, the Library, or the Tanning.

Presentations and Voting
 Presentations and voting will begin at 2pm on Saturday to decide which groups have produced the most sensible and/or imaginative ideas, and how much they should get.

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What The Press Said

‘Dulverton decides how to spend £15,000’

People in Dulverton are set to have their say on how £15,000 of public money should be spent to improve the town’s economic, health and community well being.

The Sensible Spending event will be held at Dulverton Town Hall on Saturday at the end of a two-day exhibition of the Parish Plan.

Community groups will have three minutes to say why they deserve a share of the cash pot with the audience voting on whether the idea is good value for money.


The town is part of a national programme asking local people how public funds could be better spent, and is the first in a National Park to take on the scheme.

Dulverton Town Council leader Chris Nelder said: *“The town council wants to support the most effective and efficient delivery of public services in the town by involving residents in allocating less than 0.2% of the public budget.”*

Sport, dance, fitness, and improvements to the environment are likely to figure among the bids, as well as priorities from the 261 households that contributed to the Parish Plan.

West Somerset Council leader, Cllr Keith Ross, said: *“We want to make what is already a strong community an even better place to live, work and play.”*

The results of the parish plan will be on display at the Town Hall from tomorrow (Friday) from 2pm to 9pm and Saturday from 10am to 4pm.



The Sensible Spending event will be held from 2 to 4pm on Saturday.

All the partners and authorities supporting the initiative will attend the event including NHS Somerset, West Somerset Council, Dulverton Town Council, Exmoor National Park, Avon and Somerset Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Magna Housing, and Somerset County Council.



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What Happened And Who Helped

Eighteen ideas, requesting more than £30,000 applied for the available £15,500. On Saturday afternoon 20th February 2010, 67 people attended the decision day, voting on each proposal from one of 15 local organisations.

Each project was scored by everybody present on three criteria

1. Value for money
2. Deliverability
3. Benefit to Dulverton as a whole.

The voting process used in Dulverton was “deliberative” ie once the hall had decided on the priorities, a break was called so that some bids could be coordinated and some funds shared so that ideally there would be no losers. Community groups had to decide how they could trim their bids to fit the funding available, then a second vote was taken to find the winners.

Chris Nelder, Chairman of the Town Council, reported to the Council that “The winners ranged from the Dulverton Patient Group who organise prescription deliveries, to the junior cricket and three different dance groups for the elderly, ballroom, and young people - all good local, voluntary activities.”

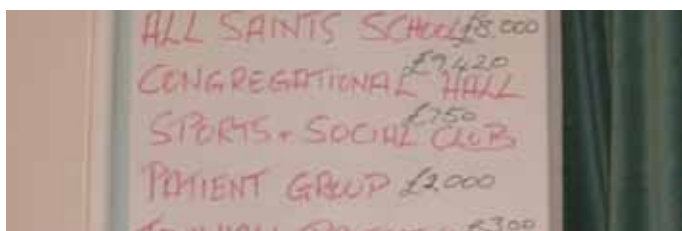
Some bidders worked together to share their equipment and budgets, demonstrating how PB brings communities to work closer together. A simple success was the bid to extend the County Council’s reluctant snow and ice management, with £820 going towards gritting Amory Road, the route to the community schools and the new medical centre.



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The Build Up And Preparations

1. Somerset PCT allocated £5,000 from the outset to support local public health initiatives, and appointed Lyn Fisher, Health Promotion Manager to support the project (Jan Hull, Deputy CEO)
2. The District Council has allocated £7,500 and appointed Corinne Matthews, Economic Regeneration, W. Somerset Council to support the project (Keith Ross, Leader)
3. The Town Council held two meetings about 'Sensible Spending', allocating £2,500, taking on the publicity and booking arrangements, providing clerk time and other resources (Chris Nelder, Chair)
4. Somerset West Police were involved from the outset, providing staff time and meetings with local Commanders (Sgt Andy Whysall; PC Clare Adams)
5. West Somerset Strategic Partnership and the Somerset Consultative and Engagement Committee invited presentations
6. The Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership set up a PB Development Group for the South West of which the Dulverton scheme became a part (John Skrine, Creating Excellence)
7. Exmoor National Park Authority hosted the first meeting of the project and the Chair arranged a meeting at Exmoor House to explore further Park support (John Dyke, Chair; Nigel Stone, CEO)
8. The County Council promised information on available and Local Initiatives budgets (Sonia Davidson-Grant, SCC; Frances Nicholson, County Councillor)
9. Magna Housing, a late invitee, attended the event at short notice and immediately gave £500 (Tony Murray; Barbara Mullan)
10. The launch of the Parish Plan took place over two days at the Town Hall on Feb 19th and 20th. The 'Sensible Spending' event was the climax of this.



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Sensible Spending

The Town Council's agreed division of partnership funding

Project	Initial request	Initial vote	Final request	Final vote	Health NHS	Economic Development WSDC	Housing Magna	Town Council
1. Junior cricket	£935	180	£935	64	£800			£135
2. 'Go Girls'	£2,924	151	£2,424	42	£1,424		£275	£725
3. Young People's Dance	£3,372	150	£2,772	40		Unsuccessful. Propose to SCC		TC?
4. All Saints School	£8,000	123	£1,300	50		£1,300		
5. Congregational Hall	£9,420	166		49	£340	£2,660		
6. Sports and Social	£750	179	£500	59	£100	£400		
7. Patient Group	£2,000	160	£1,000	60		£340		£660
8. Town Hall Projector	£400	145				Withdrawn in favour of 10. and 11.		
9. Salting Amory Rd	£840	180	£840	61	£76	£199	£225	£340
10. Dulverton Dance	£1,000	149	£500	55	£500	Equipment combined with 11		
11. Strictly ballroom	£740	182	£540	See above	£540			
12. Exmoor ponies	No bid					No bid		
13. Flower baskets	£500	183	£200	65		Referred to Town Council		£200 TC?
14. Squash Club	£1,250	181	£1,000	60		£1,000 conditional upon hotel memberships		
15. Mental health Group	£520	186	£520	61	£520			
16. Sportsfield floodlights	£3,000	166	£2,000	47	£400	£1,600		
17. Hanover Film Club	£600	155	£300	55	£300			
18. Dog walkers	£600	157	£600	40		Referred to Town Council		TC?
					£5,000	£7,499	£500	£2,060

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Letter To The Grant Winners

‘SENSIBLE SPENDING’ Participatory budgeting grant

Dear Grant Winner,

Congratulations on winning an award at Dulverton’s first Participatory Budgeting event, “Sensible Spending”, organised by Dulverton Town Council.

The budgets which constituted the event fund came from:

- The NHS - for public health initiatives £5,000
- West Somerset Council - for economic development £7,500
- Magna Housing - for support to tenants and the wider community £500
- Dulverton Town Council - for community initiatives £2,500

You will see from the attached spreadsheet how the Town Council has divided the awards between the four different funding partners in order to fit their budget criteria.

YOUR NEXT STEP is to invoice Dulverton Town Council at

for the amount of your final award (see column 4 – ‘Final request’).

Your organisation must spend this grant within 2010 according to the breakdown of costs in your application. If the amount your organisation was awarded was altered on the day, this breakdown of costs should be appropriately amended, so that it still reflects your original intention.



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Letter To The Grant Winners Continued

Projects 5 Congregational Hall, and 16 Sportsfield floodlights, are subject to planning permissions being obtained before cheques can be issued.

Project 9 Salting Amory Road: the County Council will invoice the Town Council if, or when, they are required to make additional circuits (£20 each) to salt Amory Road next winter.

We want to keep the whole process as simple as possible, but will need your organisation to account for how the grant was spent by the end of 2010. If you have any triumphs, difficulties or other stories to tell along the way, please let us know. This sort of information helps the funders to value the process and increase the possibility of it being repeated.



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**Application Form
THE PARISH PLAN
SENSIBLE SPENDING**

Dulverton Town Hall Friday 19th Feb, 2 – 9pm and Sat 20th Feb, 10am – 4pm

GIVING MONEY AWAY! APPLICATION FORM for local organisations and groups


Dulverton's Parish Plan survey results, to be launched on the above days, clarifies what local people think needs to be done to improve local life and facilities.

Public services spend £10M in Dulverton every year. More input by local people will be needed in the future to identify real priorities. To start off this process, £15K is available for us to allocate and spend now, as a way of starting the debate.

Your group or organisation can suggest how this should be done and/or bid for some of the money to improve the quality of life for residents through starting, or enhancing, an activity or service. This might be in health, education, leisure activities, recycling, the environment or something else altogether.

HOW DO WE BID?

1. Prepare a persuasive 3 minute talk, perhaps with pictures, diagrams, etc which summarises your idea
2. You will need to give some indication of costs and how it might be achieved and what it will do to improve local life
3. These presentations will be heard at 2pm on Saturday 20th Feb
4. Voting will be by those present, according to rules laid down by the MC, for what they believe to be the most important priorities.



NOT SURE? Ring Leslie Silverlock on 01398 34 14 24 for help and send your application to lesliesilverlock@groupswork.com

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**Application Form
Continued**

YOUR APPLICATION DETAILS

Name of organisation or group:

.....
.....

Contact name, phone and email:

.....
.....
.....

What your bid is for?

.....

How much money are you asking for?

.....

What will you spend it on? (breakdown of costs):

.....
.....
.....

How soon will you spend the money?


.....



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Feedback From Some Participants

1. Excellent idea – well done
 2. Fantastic turnout! Marvellous way of living locally. Think each group could have a limited presentation time eg 3mins for presentation, 5 mins Q&A. Yes – next year. Thanks so much
 3. A very interesting project – difficult to vote fairly when one hadn't heard all the bids when one was voting ie one probably gave more votes to the 1st ones. I would like it to happen again – excellent for Dulverton
 4. Timer needed for presentations next year. Yes, please to next year. 5 lovely ladies and one man
 5. Chaotic chairing and presentations. Voting on tables was actually not democratic – led by the few
 6. Strategic voting by some people. Good – brings organisations together to share ideas and facilities. Voting too complicated. Awareness – shows us what organisations are available to attend. Good for bringing community together – find out needs. Shame about shade sails! Definitely – we would love to come next year
 7. Much better to do votes in one go. Too long! Shorter speeches, 3 mins, not 10mins. Great idea. Please have again next year. Fantastic for so many locals!
 8. Very fair under difficult circumstances ie too many deserving priorities – not enough cash. Would prefer overall vote initially
 9. Definitely do again – I'm sure it will generate even more interest next time!
 10. Too many of the older people joining votes; sport and older people's projects regarded highly, young people/girls are not. Votes are unfair as groups vote for each other (some people are involved in more than one group and are voting in favour of one another). Members of groups are voting for their own clubs. A fair and confidential vote should have been given. I feel that the welfare of young people has been overlooked entirely. It's very disheartening to see people voting for themselves and not looking to the future. Emily Grosse
- 

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Feedback From Some Participants Continued


11. As a young person who has been brought up in Dulverton, and whose family still live in Dulverton I have found it disgusting that at a meeting about the community and future of Dulverton the issues of young people are completely disregarded. I now live in London, and had hoped one day to return and start a young family there. I think that I'd much rather stay in a city like London where young people can have a voice. I certainly will not bother coming back next year to vote, and partake in a room full of self-serving old people. Tom Rogers
12. Voting was very fair. All of the bids were looked at and discussed from different groups. Let's do it again next year.
13. Extremely well organised. Possibly over-long. This is a great way of getting more people involved in their community. How are you going to publicise all this? To make sure more people in the town understand this funding process?
14. Worked well: voting system for first round; location. Could do better: More notice to allow better preparation. Restrict presentation to 3 mins or less, and keep to it; voting system for second round. Please can we repeat this next year!
15. Well planned. Too many bids presented. Presentation times stretched. Different voting procedure. Yes, please to next year!
16. Today has gone very well. Everyone has had a fair way of putting their view forward. Quick and efficient way of voting. Was a great thing to do. Hope it happens every year
17. Limit of 3 mins presentation not always adhered to. Yes, try again next year
18. Too long. Practice vote – what did we achieve? Made you more aware of groups being able to amalgamate/work together! Please can we have this opportunity again.



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The Work Involved

- Invitations to authorities and individuals, meetings (all key partners travel some distance to meet in Dulverton)
 - Meetings and discussions with the PCT
 - Meetings with the local sergeant and officers and subsequently with the constabulary commanders at HQ to seek Police Authority support
 - Town Council meetings to 1. introduce the PB pilot 2. update councillors on developments
 - Parish Plan meeting to introduce the pilot to local leaders, and relate that Plan's enquiries to the PB process
 - Meeting with the County Leisure Services
 - Meeting with voluntary youth services
 - Meetings with District Council Economic Development officer
 - Meetings with the Leader of the District Council
 - Discussions with county councillors, and officers in Environment and Community Development
 - Attempts to involve the Community Council
 - Meet prospective new county councillors (agree to await outcome of county elections and involve new county councillor)
 - Input to Parish Plan
 - Community assets identified and listed
 - Meeting with regional Community Empowerment Network
 - Proposal to the RIEP
- 

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The Work Involved Continued

- PB leaflets distributed
- Toolkits lent to key District, Town and County partners
- List of PB outcomes constructed for community safety and the police
- Meeting with the area partnership of Parish Councils to introduce and promote PB
- Meeting with new county councillor to seek proportion of her discretionary grant
- Meeting with new police commander, sergeant and PC
- PCT assigns local manager time
- Town Council agrees clerk time and support
- Link PB to Parish Plan analysis and launch
- Meeting with the PACT.



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Some Local Issues Identified In The Process

- Five different, centralised contracts for hedge and grass cutting
- Paying for local public toilets
- Mental health support
- Exercise facilities to tackle heart and obesity problems
- Burying cables
- A cycle path avoiding a dangerous road
- Unenforced, errant car parking
- Control of car park revenue
- Road closures
- Youth provision.



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Factors Affecting Negotiations

- Central negotiations miss deadline for £20k Home Office grant
- Outcome of Parish Plan awaited
- County Council elections
- Government introduces the Duty to Involve in April 2009
- Possible integration with other development programmes eg Parish Lengthsman, Leisure/Health Service funded gym, playground grant
- The decriminalisation of parking and the removal of powers and revenue from the Town Council
- District Council Leader and Officer generous with time and support
- Town Council Chair generous with time and support
- Police Authority support
- County Council support
- Nine authorities to be negotiated with, five of them between 20 and thirty miles away – County, District, Town, National Park, Police, Health, Community, Housing, Fire and Rescue, plus regional government interests (Government Office, Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, Community Empowerment Network)
- Facilitator in Community Council left
- Identifying County budgets that could be subject to local influence.



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Commitments Made

- £5,000 and organiser's time from the PCT
- £7,500 and Leader's time from the District Council
- £2,500, clerk and Chairman's time, bookings and publicity from the Town Council
- £500 from Magna Housing
- Officer time from the Police
- Fire and Rescue support and display
- Parish Plan group support
- Police (CDRP) and Town Council resourcing
- National Park support and resources
- LSP support.



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Some Lessons Learnt

- Without a co-ordinator part of whose job might include PB, as in major urban councils, NDCs and some third sector organisations, a small local team is needed to facilitate a rural project, possibly with some parish clerk or other partner's time
- However committed are the local professionals and partners, their remote line managers' support is crucial, time consuming and subject to staff movements and changing targets
- Small councils have tight budgets. Influencing mainstream budgets becomes a priority, as well as creating a small community fund for local people to allocate
- Identify and involve not just partners but other local initiatives from the outset; adapt PB project to fit public meetings eg about ASB, car parking, council protests. PB has to fit the schedules of other local activities, burning local issues, meetings and commitments
- Communications in rural areas, especially with remote council budget holders and decision makers, are expensive in time and travel for local volunteers
- Ideas and suggestions about how to tackle other, often major, community issues and improvements to the delivery of services which arise as a consequence of a PB initiative, in addition to expenditure decisions, demand attention too
- Surrounding Parish Councils and their parishioners want a say in the project because they work, shop, travel and have relatives in the pilot area.

Leslie Silverlock, Town Councillor



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APPENDIX 3

Examples of the 24 facilities owned or managed by the people of Dulverton:

- The Town Hall
- The Heritage Centre
- The Snooker Club
- Pavilion
- Tennis Courts
- Squash Courts
- Three churches
- Community School
- Fire Station.



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APPENDIX 4

Facilities managed by the Town Council:

- Three car parks
- Two recreation grounds
- A sports field
- Cemetery
- Churchyard
- Town pond
- Town flower displays
- Bus shelter
- Town signs
- Town benches
- A range of one off educational, environmental, and community projects.



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APPENDIX 5

The Localism Bill
Dulverton - A National Pilot Programme
Parking and Traffic Management A Proposal

Introduction

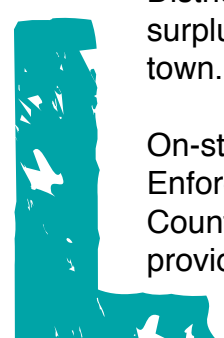
The new Government's **Localism Bill** requires public services to:

- Lift the burden of bureaucracy by removing the cost and control of unnecessary red tape and regulation, whose effect is to restrict local action
- Empower 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
- 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.

The current situation

Dulverton wants to manage its own car parks and on street parking in order to sustain a small market town, local outlying communities, businesses, and tourism.

Currently the Dulverton Town Council leases three car parks from the West Somerset District Council, at approximately £20,000 per annum. The Town Council makes a surplus of approximately £10,000 p.a. which it spends on community facilities in the town.



On-street parking has been managed until now by the police. With Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) this will pass to the County Council. It is likely that Somerset County Council will have to contract this responsibility out, either to commercial providers or other councils.

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A Proposition

Dulverton Town Council wants to manage traffic movement in the town, including the car parks and on-street, so that traffic flows freely and the large number of small communities served by the town can access facilities easily.

The seventy-two essential facilities already managed by local people and organisations are listed at the end of this Proposal.

West Somerset District Council, whose headquarters are 20 miles away, is insisting that it takes over Dulverton's car parks. The Town Council has been managing these for 15 years, keeping costs the lowest in the district, and ploughing profits back into the community. The district council will not save money by taking the car parks back, and intends to raise charges by more than 50% eg £70 to £110 for a permit.

The District's plan to centralise car park management runs counter to the Big Society's Localism Bill.


Benefits

Adopting this Proposal means:

- Reduced management costs
- Parking charges remain unchanged
- Reduced district and county costs, and council tax rises
- Keeping income in the town for community facilities
- Managing parking enforcement locally, reducing District and County travel costs, and providing better service provision
- The town council precept will not need to rise in order to cover lost income
- Local events and street closing orders will be managed locally by people and authorities who understand the local options and parking needs e.g. for major events like Carnival, The Folk Festival, Starlight, Boxing Day
- Bus routes and fire station emergencies continue to flow freely.



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Dulverton's economy is dependent on visitors. It makes economic, traffic, and community sense for parking to be managed by the most locally elected representatives, who live and work in the area, are nearest the problems and solutions, and understand the needs of the local community.

The Proposal

The most perfect solution for all the authorities concerned, keeping costs down, promoting efficient management of public services, and sustaining local communities, will be an asset transfer of car parks to Dulverton Town Council, with civil parking enforcement devolved to the council as soon as possible.

1. West Somerset Council is requested, urgently, to devolve Dulverton's three car parks, as part of an asset transfer, to the Town Council
2. Somerset County Council is requested, urgently, to devolve responsibility for CPE to Dulverton Town Council, as soon as possible.

Community facilities

The seventy-two essential facilities already managed by local people and organisations include: the Town Hall, Heritage Centre, two recreation grounds, cemetery, squash, tennis, football, cricket pitches and sports pavilion, 22 shops, Bank, Library, filling stations, Recycling Centre, Police Station, three Churches, a major Medical Centre, Community and First Schools, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Supermarket, Leisure and Arts facilities, Snooker Club, pubs and restaurants, a major Post Office, pharmacy, Laundry, three Estate Agents, five Repair Garages, two Coach Companies.



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APPENDIX 6


‘Your Local Budget’
Dulverton’s participatory budgeting pilot
Briefing for the Localism Select Committee

Dulverton is a small market town of 1,500 people serving a population of 4,500 on Southern Exmoor, the headquarters of the National Park.

Nine publicly financed authorities serve the town, spending £10,000,000 p.a. – Fire, Police, Health, Housing, National Park, County, District, Community, and Town Councils.

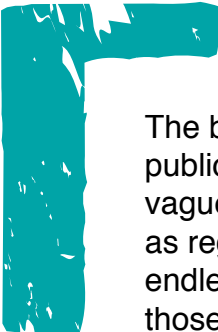
Local people own or manage 24 of the public facilities in the town e.g. the Town Hall, the Heritage Centre, Sportsfield, squash and tennis courts, bar and pavilion, cemetery, recreation grounds, churches, fire station etc.

Localism has been practised for many years because the town is an isolated rural hub, 20 and 30 miles away, respectively, from the larger authorities intended to serve it.



Participatory budgeting began two years ago, seeking to influence mainstream budgets as well as offering grants to local groups. Four of the nine authorities contributed £15,000 for local people to vote on health, economic, environment, and community developments. Four other authorities gave support in kind. Since then (Feb 10) the town has been seeking to influence other budgets and services, coordinate traffic management, resist closures to its library, recycling centre, youth club, and negotiate asset transfers from the county and district councils. 298 people attended the public meeting on Monday night to vote on local services, facilities, precept and budgets. 48 people volunteered to join action groups.

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The burden on local volunteers and businesses in seeking to deal with the larger public authorities is exhausting – endless meeting trails, papers, correspondence, vague or withheld information, accidental obfuscation, custom and practice posing as regulation, detailed evaluation in return for small grants, bureaucratic ping-pong, endless energy sapping delays, travel, and time off work. Only retired people and those with independent means and great enthusiasm have the time to pursue localism's goals.

The biggest block to Dulverton's local development programme is the large and distant County Council. It would not provide budget information for "Sensible Spending", Dulverton's participatory budgeting project in 09/10. It assumes that Civil Parking Enforcement will automatically be its responsibility, makes decisions to dispose of the youth club building and the recycling centre without overt criteria which the public, let alone the Town Council, can scrutinise.

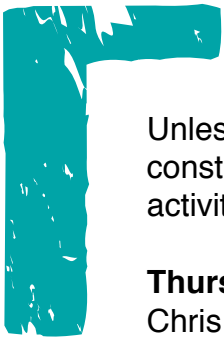
The District Council, which has supported the PB pilot, wants to renege on the 15 year lease for the town's three car parks, which produce a substantial profit that the town council ploughs back into community activities, while at the same time keeping the charges the lowest in the county.

Two very simple illustrations of the need for localism include:

1. Five different grass cutting contracts issued by the National Park, Housing Association, County, District, and Town Councils; machinery brought from 20 and 30 miles away by different contractors to cut neighbouring areas of grass, all of which could be managed by one person locally
2. It costs the district council £3,000 a year to make round trips of 40 miles to collect £300 from the toilets which the Town Council, in the interests of tourism, would make free if they were locally managed.



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Unless the large authorities are obliged to devolve to responsible and properly constituted local bodies, the push for greater localism will lead to no more meaningful activity than communities use to their own affairs already.

Thursday 27th Jan 2011

Chris Nelder, Chair, Dulverton Town Council
Amanda Rose, Clerk, Dulverton Town Council
Bern How, Cllr, Dulverton Town Council
Keith Ross, District Cllr, West Somerset
Christine Dubery, Postmistress
Leslie Silverlock, Cllr, Dulverton Town Council



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