

Radstock and Westfield

Our Big Local Plan

2014-17



Miners wheel and clock tower, Radstock Museum

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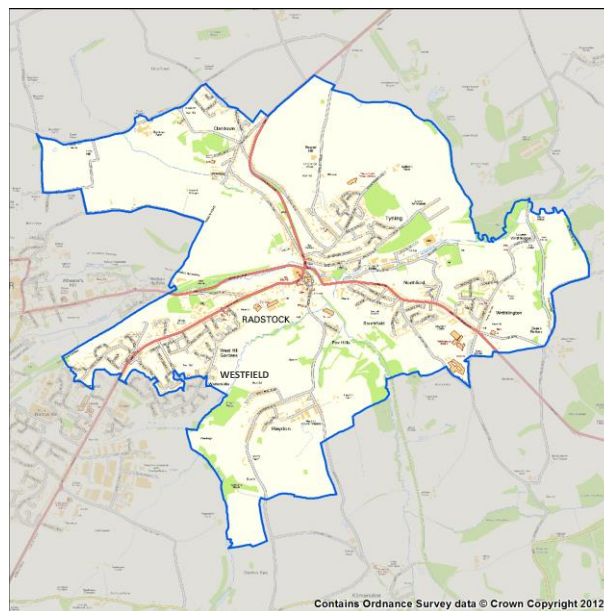
Introduction

In November 2010 the people of Radstock and Westfield heard that they had been awarded £1 million by the Big Lottery under their new Big Local programme. This funding was to be spread over 10 years and was provided to meet the needs identified by local residents. Radstock and Westfield is now one of 150 areas across England that have been awarded £1 million, with the aim of putting local residents at the heart of the decision making process.

The following plan describes our priorities for the Big Local programme as a whole and gives some detail as to what Radstock and Westfield Big Local intends to do over the coming three years. This plan has been approved by the local residents and other organisations in the partnership.

1. Background

'Radstock' and 'Westfield' are the two local authority wards that include the outlying communities of: Haydon, Clandown, Tynning, Writhlington, Radstock and Westfield. For the sake of brevity this Plan refers to them collectively as 'Radstock and Westfield'.



Radstock and Westfield Big Local set up a local steering group in 2012, consisting of local people with an active interest in the community and our area and a representative of each of the local parish councils. The steering group has been responsible for driving forward the Big Local programme, involving and engaging with the communities in our area of benefit and putting together the Community Profile (Appendix 1).

In June 2014 we started to write this plan and at a meeting in the Victoria Hall on the 10th of June, we started the process of forming our Big Local Partnership. The partnership is a collection of local people whom live and work in the Radstock and Westfield area and includes a representative from Radstock Town Council and Westfield Parish Council. From

within the partnership a management group has been formed to take the day to day decisions on behalf of the partnership.

2. History of the Radstock and Westfield Big Local area

Radstock was formerly at the heart of the mining activity within the Somerset Coalfields, with the outlying villages up in the surrounding hillside built to home the miners as near to the pit heads as possible. Housing consisted of small mining cottages and other infill housing. There was the Somerset and Dorset and GWR Joint railway. The last pit closed in 1973 and the last train out was in the mid-1980s.



Radstock train station

Radstock and Westfield also relied heavily on manufacturing and the printing and packaging industries up until about 5 years ago when the last large manufacturer closed down.



Westfield Methodist Built in 1869

Westfield has expanded over the years and there is a high level of small developments of new homes within the village boundary and a much larger housing development under construction in what was previously a large manufacturing packaging business. There is also a large industrial estate with a wide range of business activity as well as a large printing business. There are, however, only a small number of shops in the area.

The other villages of Clandown, Writhlington, Haydon and Tynning are more isolated and disadvantaged by very limited public transport services, community activities and events and few shopping opportunities within their own communities; with Haydon and Tynning having no shop at all. Haydon and Writhlington have industrial estates which have been built over the old pit heads, where an opportunity for future apprentices may be found.



Pit wheel next to Radstock memorial garden

3. The Vision

The local population identifies itself as separate small communities, mainly based on the old mining settlements, however through our consultations residents recognised that new opportunities and projects need to bring about change and enable our communities to come together to benefit themselves and the residents of Radstock and Westfield.

Our vision is for a community that is participating in its future and working in partnership to make things happen.

The “Need”: We need to unlock potential, get people and communities connected and working together, manage transition from old mining, printing and industrial to social enterprises and small businesses, and build on the ability of our communities to identify and respond to local need.

The “Actions”: By getting people involved in making decisions and making things happen we want to help create thriving local communities that provide 'good', local jobs for residents, a wide range of different and challenging leisure activities, high class education for our young people, a healthy population within a green and pleasant environment. We will be celebrating our history while embracing the potential for future tourism with the creation of a destination “spot” through the encouragement of a range of local independent shops as well as connecting community groups and businesses to provide services for our local residents.

The “How”: £1,000,000 of Lottery money cannot achieve all this, but we can work with others towards this and support projects that are 'catalysts for change' in our community.

4. The Need

The Community Profile (see Appendix A) for Radstock and Westfield Big Local contains some detailed descriptions of the local population, which we have obtained from the 2013 Census and through our own research. In the last 2 years we have also conducted a questionnaire and received 232 responses (both paper and online) from local residents.

From the results of the questionnaire we know that the following issues are the most important to the people living in the Radstock and Westfield area:

- **Facilities for children and young people**
- **Better transport**
- **Improving community facilities**
- **Jobs and training**
- **More events for residents to come together**

A copy of the full report can be downloaded from the Radstock and Westfield big local website: www.myradstock.org.uk or www.mywestfield.org.uk.

In addition the Radstock Youth Partnership (RYP) commissioned a consultation with young people in the area in 2012.

The consultation questions and approach was agreed by Children and Young People themselves and was carried out using detached, outreach and centre based approaches. Eight focus groups were undertaken at a local secondary school and 220 responses were received during the consultation period and the analysis was completed using Survey Monkey. The results of this consultation were published in May 2012 and key issues of concern for children and young people (C&YP) were reported as the following:

Transport

The cost of transport was listed as a concern and that activities are too far away to access without transport. Transport issues were more important to young women than young men.

Feeling unsafe

A large proportion of C&YP, seventy-one per cent, sometimes feel unsafe in the Radstock and surrounding areas.

Dark areas/bad lighting

Sixty-six percent of C&YP reported that they were particularly concerned about dark areas and bad lighting in the local area and over thirty-four per cent of those responding avoided going out after dark. Over eighty-eight per cent of females go out with someone else rather than go out alone.

A range of activities for us

Children and young people are keen to engage with a variety of activities. The variety and range of activities vary dependant on their ages, this enables activities to become more targeted dependant on age. They were also keen to engage in practical skills and training such as life skills, but again what is offered needs to be tailored for both gender and age groups.

Sixty-eight per cent of those young people consulted were also keen to be engaged in having a say about decisions and activities which affect them in the future. It will be important for this group to have a say about proposals and decisions about how and where the Big Local funding should be directed, especially if this group are highlighted to be one of the highest importance issues through other consultations.



Coal truck planter, Radstock centre



Coal truck planter, Westfield

5. The Actions – A plan for 2014-17

The Big Local Steering Group has identified the following themes and priorities for action over the coming three years.

6.1 People

This theme includes all our plans concerning how we intend to deliver the Big Local Plan, how we will involve the broad range of residents from Radstock and Westfield, and how we intend to involve our young people so that they will become central to what happens in our area over the coming decade and beyond. Improving what the area has to offer for children and young people came top of the list of 'wants' in the community research.



Launch of the Partnership

We are also keen to make some progress in developing projects aimed at encouraging volunteering and healthy lifestyles. We hope to work in conjunction with Mike Plows at the volunteer centre, who can bring together people and businesses who wish to donate volunteer time in Radstock and Westfield. We intend that this theme will provide the link between the other themes in the plan as they grow and develop.

6.1.1 Young people's budget

Under our People theme we want to make an early on start improving services and facilities for young people in the area as well as involving them in the whole Big Local process.

We would like to devolve some of our Big Local budget each year to young people. This will involve getting a group of young people from the area together and working with them so that they gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to allocate funds to projects they feel will benefit their community. As part of this young people will be encouraged to visit other Big Local areas that are doing similar things. The precise details as to how the budget will be allocated will be devised by the Big Local Management Committee, as an



Radical youth hub

early action plan, in conjunction with local youth workers.

6.1.2 Maintaining Youth Work in the area

In order to make sure our ambition to bring our young people into the centre of the Big Local process is met, we believe there is a case for employing a full time Youth Leader. Initially we would wish to do this in partnership with B&NES who have allocated funds for youth work in our area until 2018. With this in mind we have made provision for this in our budget proposals from the outset.

6.1.3 Capacity Building for active citizens/residents

The past four years have seen a dedicated group of local residents spending a large amount of time on consultation and developing our plans. We need to develop our programme of resident involvement so that our partnership is as effective as possible and also so that we do not become dependent on the 'usual suspects'. To that end we want to create a capacity building fund, to pay for training, information sharing, visits to other communities and volunteer expenses. We intend to match this funding with other grant funding to provide the resources we need to build our own capacity, skills and knowledge so that we can deliver this Big Local Programme independently and sustainably.

6.1.4 Events

Following the success of our Dragon's Den event earlier this year, we would like to do it again! In addition to this we would also like to hold a launch event (once we have received the go-ahead from the Local Trust for our Plan). In addition we have made provision in our budget for an annual review event, to which we would invite local people, and which would feed into the development of the detail of our Year 2 programme.



6.1.5 Delivering the Big Local Plan

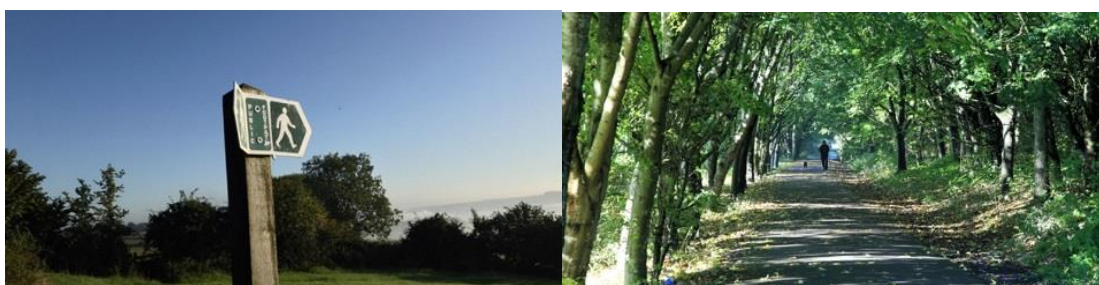
Our programme for the first three years of the Big Local is ambitious but it needs a great deal of work still to ensure that we are able to deliver. We need to keep on top of progress, involve other partners, prepare other funding proposals and liaise with key stakeholders such as the two Parish Councils, B&NES, local housing and training providers.

We therefore propose to create a new Programme Co-ordinator post for the initial 3 years of the programme. This part of our budget also makes provision for resident-led evaluation and the costs of holding Partnership meetings.

6.2 Mobility

Mobility covers issues relating to how our residents, regardless of ability, can get around Radstock and Westfield and includes modes of transport.

Radstock is at the heart of a collection of well-preserved and rural ex-mining villages which are built up on the hills around the old colliery and pit entrances.



Colliers Way cycle path

6.2.1. Local cycling project

The recent consultation with our young people and residents shows that seventy-nine per cent of those surveyed felt unsafe walking/cycling along their current route options to school and local recreational areas due to the close proximity of cars, no pathway, steep and uneven surfaces, darkness, tunnels and too much mud. So, as a result, they stay at home or are driven.

The first question we need to answer is 'Is it possible to connect our villages via a cycle and footpath?' This could bring residents safely into Radstock and to the transport links that are available including buses and the Colliers Way Cycle paths, linking with Midsomer Norton and even Frome. Perhaps it could use the currently disused Railway (Brunel Engine) sheds to hire out bikes, toilets and provide a space for a possible cafe for refreshments.



Linking all five villages (Haydon, Westfield, Writhlington, Clandown, Tynning) via “the Incline” to Radstock, with Writhlington and then across The Batch to Westfield would provide a challenging yet circular cycle route, safely into the heart of our community, possibly following the miners’ footpaths through our heritage and beautiful surroundings on their way to the relevant pit heads/Villages.

Radstock is under regeneration with the introduction of a large housing development on the old railway land adjacent to the fantastic Colliers Way cycle path¹.

So now is the time to improve the infra-structure, we need to be spending the funding we have been awarded and existing budgets more wisely and sustainably to make it work for everyone.

“And, of course, if kids are able to walk and cycle to school and play outside, more of them will have their hour a day of physical activity, saving a fortune on our health budgets. And if buses were regular, reliable and affordable and we began to use them, the enormous costs to businesses and taxpayers of congestion, fuel and traffic accidents would reduce significantly.” (Sustrans, 2012)

6.3 Place



Radstock Museum

As the plan develops we intend that this theme should include the main elements of what will make the physical environment of Radstock and Westfield a great place to be. This includes housing; community facilities; crime; safety and preserving or improving the local environment.

Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) has recently announced its intention to prepare a Placemaking Plan² for the entire local authority area. We are very keen to work with this process to ensure that the needs and desires of our residents are fully considered.

Access for all: Our research to date has revealed a desire for improved play facilities for all our children. We also realise that the local environment and its history provides an opportunity to develop some really interesting and challenging play projects, perhaps along the lines of the “Go Ape” project in the Forest of Dean. We do recognise that this is an ambitious idea and so in the first year of this plan we would like to use a small amount of the Big Local funding to look into the feasibility of providing adventurous and challenging play in the area. We believe this could not only provide for our own young people but could be a key

¹ See www.colliersway.co.uk/heritage/index.php

² See <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/placemaking-plan>

ingredient in making our area a leisure 'destination' and so developing the local economy.



Tom Hyton and Writhlington Play Park

6.3.1 Improving local facilities



Victoria Hall, Radstock

As well as developing new ideas we are also keen to maintain our existing buildings and public spaces – our heritage. With that in mind we would like to develop a programme of maintenance with an annual small works budget. We believe we can use this to attract further investment and support, particularly where heritage projects are involved. The Victoria Hall dates back to 1866 and has recently been refurbished and now provides a new arts centre, dance college and community space hosting craft markets, pantomime, theatre. The acoustic café (Star Awards winner) has recently been launched which has proven to be very successful alongside large screen films and theatre productions. Further considerations are to provide the real cinema experience with fold-away seating.

However many of the individual village halls/working men clubs have been neglected and will need to be brought up to date or reopened to bring events to the individual communities in the Big Local area.

The Lamb Inn has recently been sold to a local developer who is hoping to reopen as a restaurant, pub and community facility and we hope to work with the developer in the future. We have been made aware that Writhlington Village Hall is in need of a new floor, The Radstock working man club requires a new cooling system, Haydon Que Club a kitchen and solar panels, Westfield Parish Council want CCTV and the In Bloom team need a new shed!



The Lamb Inn at Clandown, currently closed

Local centre/service hub:

Consultation with local residents has highlighted a potential desire for a community base or 'hub' which might also include an information centre for the whole area. At present this is just an idea, so we are keen to undertake further consultation and research in the first year of our plan. This idea has the potential to link with all other aspects of our Big Local plan.

The housing development on the old railway site will also contain a community centre within which discussions are being held with Curo, Somer Valley FM, Radstock Town Council and the Big Local Partnership for it to become a hub/advice centre.

6.3.2 Local Food

We would like to develop the idea of producing our own food through the active encouragement of allotments, community gardens and orchard projects, setting up a farmers market and a local green grocers where community grown food can be shared with the local residents; reducing waste and the carbon footprint of our fresh food.

6.4 Business

Radstock and Westfield have seen a radical shift in the type of business that operates in the area over the last 2 to 3 generations. Mining has ceased completely and other types of heavy industry have all but ended. BANES Core Strategy (Planning) has identified the “economic revitalisation” of our area as one of its priorities.



Radstock and Westfield shopping areas

Our Community Profile acknowledges that to date there has been a poor response from local business to surveys. We would like to put that right in the first year of our plan; we already have an up to date list of local businesses and their contacts, and would like to utilise this to undertake a proper survey of business needs and aspirations and then feed the findings into a plan for action.

6.4.1 Local business support

Local jobs for local people are a need in the community. The Radstock and Westfield Social Economic Forum had begun work on improving apprenticeships and also provided a funding stream for small businesses to take out start up loans. However the Forum has ceased to operate but a new development advisory group has been set up and will be meeting shortly. Members of the Big Local Partnership and its Management Committee will therefore work with local businesses to develop new plans to stimulate business and the local economy. Following funding from the SPARK awards, work will also take place to actively encourage residents to take up the Star awards programme and become a social enterprise community.

6.4.2 Local shopping

The Community Profile identified a desire on the part of local people to preserve local shopping by encouraging the development of small independent shops to enhance the Radstock town centre and make Radstock a distinct shopping destination.

We need to do more work on this, with our partners at B&NES, Lindon Homes, NRR and the business community. One idea that could become an early action that stimulates local shopping would be to establish a local farmers' market along the lines of one that currently operates on one day a month in Midsomer Norton. This could support local food producers as well as provide a new shopping service for the area.

6.5 Lifelong Learning

The need for all our residents to have access to learning opportunities throughout their lives is as great as anywhere else. This supports the employability of local people as well as improving their quality of life. We are very fortunate to have some excellent schools serving our area and we want to make sure that the Big Local supports them into the future.



It is after school that we feel needs some attention, in particular we want to look into the feasibility of creating learning opportunities locally that can serve local businesses and even help to create the businesses of the future in Radstock and Westfield, linking with the previous theme.

6.5.1 Local apprenticeships

We will work with the Frederick Foundation (Small business loans) and local employers encouraging the development of new apprenticeship opportunities and local jobs for our residents. As they become available we will ensure that local people know of their existence and have the potential to take up whatever opportunities arise.

6.5.2 Employment focussed training and work experience

Being unemployed for any length of time, particularly when you are looking for your first job or making a career change, can be really tough. Often what is required is some basic training and/or the chance to gain experience of working in your chosen field. The provision of job-focussed training and work experience is therefore another issue that we would like to pursue through our partners and we have 'earmarked' a small sum of money as funding to encourage this to happen.

6.6 Communications

We are very keen to ensure that all our residents know exactly what is being planned and discussed with regard to our Big Local Plan and we want that to continue throughout the 10 years of its 'life'.

6.6.1 Newsletter

We would like to use a variety of different ways of communicating with local residents, and indeed with the 'outside world'. This includes advertising in local newspapers and the production of a newsletter that can be received in paper and electronic form. We have been looking at the sort of local newsletters that are being produced regularly in other Big Local areas and would like to proceed as soon as possible with the production of our own. We believe this sort of project has enormous potential to develop spin-offs for local business and local young people with the development of the Community Reporters role in partnership with Somer Valley FM.

6.6.2 Branding

As well as continuing to develop our website(s)³ to provide information about our Big Local work, we would like to develop a distinctive local branding that will appeal to our residents and businesses and encourage people to get involved. We are also keen that this work will serve to promote the area as a place for people from outside the area to visit and enjoy.

6.6.3 Central Information Point

We are keen to provide at least one physical base for the Big Local in a part of our area that most people would be able to visit on a regular basis. This would be a local information point that helps people to stay in touch with what is happening through the Big Local, as well as find out how they can get involved. We understand that many Big Local areas have identified this issue as a priority for the first three years, and so we would like to link up with other areas as part of a process of developing this idea.

This proposal links very well with the provisions for volunteering and community events under the **people** theme, and could eventually become a major part of the community hub idea proposed under our **places** theme.

An opportunity to make some early progress with this exists through the regeneration of



³ www.myrad

the NRR land and the creation of a new community centre; members of the partnership are looking at the potential to share this with the local housing association (Curo), Radstock Town Council and our local community radio station Somer Valley FM, to provide a local information point where all residents can come and find out what is going on and how to get involved.

7. The “How”

Funding breakdown

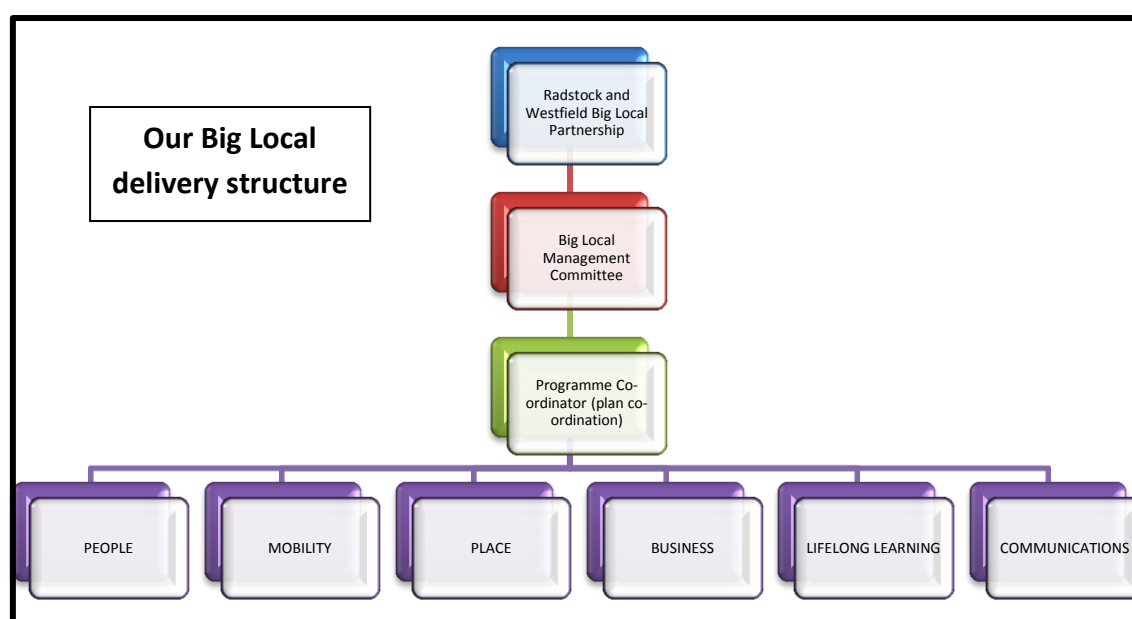
See the Excel spreadsheet in Appendix 2

7.1 Delivering our Big Local Plan

Ensuring that we deliver the best possible results for the local area and its residents is our **absolute priority**. Delivering a complex and multi-faceted plan like this one will require a high degree of co-ordination and decisions will need to be made in a timely and informed manner. It is for that reason that we have established a Management Committee within our overall Big Local Partnership, whose purpose is to make the day-to-day decisions required to deliver our plan as well as ensure that it stays ‘on course’, meeting the strategic goals agreed by the Partnership and with the Local Trust.

7.1.1 Programme Co-ordinator

In addition to this we would like to appoint a suitably experienced person to manage the programme as a whole for the first three years at least. A job description and person specification for this post is currently being drawn up by the Management Committee and provision has been made in the funding profile under the ‘**people**’ section (6.1.5)



Each of the 6 themes will all have at least one member of the partnership with delegated responsibility to work with the Programme Co-ordinator taking the lead in ensuring that it gets underway and delivers in line with what has been agreed in the Plan.

7.1.2 Our Locally Trusted Organisations

Since April 2014 our Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO) has been Westfield Parish Council. We have just been through the process of selecting our LTO for the longer term. We have used a tendering process and have found expertise in Financial Management, Community Development and Engagement, Communications and Business Support. We have appointed two LTOs for the delivery phase and these are for Westfield Parish Council to continue their robust financial management of the funding and Somer Valley FM to take on the communication element, including developing an interactive website and social media presence, which will contribute to ensuring residents are informed and included within the Big Local process.

7.1.3 Principles

The Radstock and Westfield Big Local Steering Partnership have agreed that the whole of our plan should be underpinned by three principles: Sustainability; Capacity Building; Partnership Working, with equality being the corner stone of all these.

7.1.4 Sustainability: Self-supporting and caring for our environment

The funding from Big Local is a great opportunity for us to lay the foundations for lasting improvements in our communities. The issues we are addressing in Radstock and Westfield have not arisen overnight and the partnership is clear that the solutions cannot be delivered in just 10 years.

Therefore it is essential that this plan puts in place initiatives that will outlast the 10 year funding from the Local Trust and will have created a greater ability for the area to look after itself, without the need for endless fundraising!

We feel the key to this is that the area should become a place that people will want to visit and enjoy and where businesses will choose to set up and employ local people.

In the coming two to three years we intend to develop this part of our plan, with the support of the Local Trust and with a focus on social investment that stays in the community and benefits us for generations to come.

We also recognise that an important aspect of ensuring that Radstock and Westfield has a prosperous and sustainable future lies in our ability to preserve our local environment. We will ensure that, as far as is possible, all our activities will have a positive impact on the environment and our local ecosystems. We will be careful not to waste resources and will maximise opportunities to reuse and recycle.

7.1.5 Capacity Building across the whole Big Local programme

We want local people to continue to be in control of the Big Local programme throughout its 10 year life and to continue improving the area for many years to come.

We are agreed that all the initiatives and projects funded through Big Local and its partners should be locally led or should be aiming to be locally led.

We want the money to result in a sustainable framework for continued community engagement and improvement beyond the ten year funding programme. To do this we will ensure that local people have the opportunity to develop skills and experiences, this in turn will increase their capacity for identifying, responding to and improving all aspects of community life.

As a result we have allocated funds aimed at helping local people to put together projects and proposals that they can then run on behalf of the Big Local Partnership.

7.1.6 Partnerships

In order to deliver our vision for the area we will need to work with a wide range of organisations. This will ensure that we maximise the opportunities to deliver better services and facilities for our area as well as making it a lot easier to ensure we continue to develop after Big Local funding has ended. We have now formed our own Big Local Partnership to oversee the entire 10 year programme, and through the Management Committee we will ensure that this principle of partnership working is instilled into all our activities.

8. Appendices

- Community profile
- The funding breakdown (Excel spreadsheet)

Different formats will be provided on request from the Radstock and Westfield Big Local team via: sarah@myradstock.org.uk