

The 'Big Society'

What it means for local government

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former and current Chief Executive
of Gateshead Council



Launch of the Big Society

"You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society"

David Cameron, Prime Minister



The Big Society

'Social energy is the positive energy that comes from spending time in a stimulating environment with other people'.

The Big Society Network

'Aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable'.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams



The Big Society

Policy Priorities

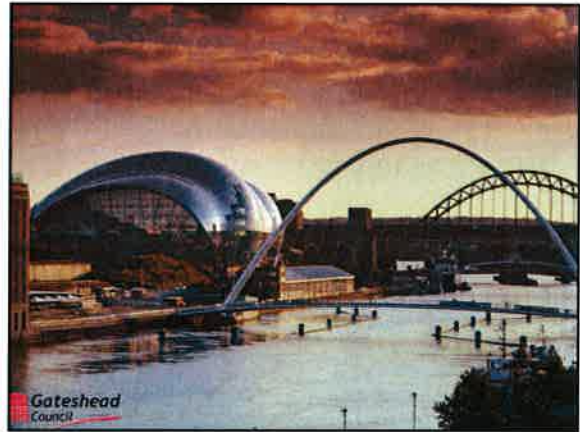
1. To give communities more powers (*Localism and Devolution*);
2. To encourage people to take an active role in their communities (*volunteerism*);
3. To transfer power from Central Government to the people;
4. To support cooperatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises;
5. To publish Government data (*open and transparent government*).



Big Society

Is it realistic?

- Repackaging of previous governments' policies?
- Based on perception that Society is broken?
- Associated with austerity?
- Devolving power to local people – by-passing local government?



Neighbourhood Working

- Provide strong, visible and accountable leadership at all levels from neighbourhoods to the whole Borough
- Engage communities and empower people
- Deliver efficient, joined up, high quality services which meet the specific needs of each neighbourhood



Help us shape the future of Gateshead 

Vision 2030

What will life be like...



For you ? • For your family ? • For your neighbourhood ?

A promotional graphic for "Vision 2030". It features a dark red background with white text. At the top, it says "Help us shape the future of Gateshead" followed by the Gateshead Strategic Partnership logo. Below that, "Vision 2030" is written in a large, white, serif font, with "2030" in a lighter shade. Underneath, "What will life be like..." is written in a smaller white font. The central part of the graphic is a collage of images: a sailboat on the water, a group of people standing together, a large wooden cross, and modern buildings. At the bottom, the text "For you ? • For your family ? • For your neighbourhood ?" is written in white.

Voluntary Organisation of the Year



 Gateshead Council

Planning for real



Flood Warden Scheme



 Gateshead Council



Gateshead Youth Assembly



A group of young people from across Gateshead who make decisions and plan events as "a voice for young people"

 Gateshead Council

Deckham Clean Sweep



- South Street School
- St. Mark's Church
- Fifi International African Youth Club
- 50 residents
- Groundwork's Green Volunteers
- 11 gardens improved
- 40 hanging baskets
- 40 garden planters
- 40 terracotta pots planted

Greenside Banner Tales

Pit tubs



The Economist

Radical local government
Political Petri dishes



Co-operative Council: A social productivity framework

The Co-operative spectrum

Co-operative August	← →		Co-operative Services
Working in line with co-operative values and principles	Residents actively informing decision making	Co-producing services with communities	Services delivered through co-operatives and mutuels



Principles we should hold on to:

- Democratic accountability
- Stewardship
- Public Value
- Social Justice
- Civic Entrepreneurship
- Empowering local communities



Questions...

- What difference has the Big Society made here, in Northumberland, and in Riding Mill?
- What elements of the policy do you think have long term implications?
- What are the barriers to making the Big Society more relevant, locally and nationally?
- Is there any advice we could give the policy makers to make it more relevant?



