The ‘Big Society’
What it means for local government

Roger Kelly and Jane Robinson
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?
Voluntary Organisation of the Year

Planning for real

Flood Warden Scheme

A group of young people from across Gateshead who make decisions and plan events as "a voice for young people"
Deckham Clean Sweep
• South Street School
• St. Mark’s Church
• Fifth 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government provision</th>
<th>Co-operative provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in line with co-operative values and principles</td>
<td>Services delivered through co-operatives and multiples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residents actively informing decision making</td>
<td>Co-producing services with communities</td>
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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?