

The Importance of Community Anchor Organisations to Empowerment Issues in the North West



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SPARTH Community Centre, the Ulverston Ford Park Community Group, the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre, Four Estates Ltd, and the Alt Valley Community Trust are all best practice examples of community anchor organisations in the North West region of England. They all, to some extent, provide key services, activities, meeting points, and capacity building for communities and community groups in their locality, often a small neighbourhood or ward. Despite this valuable function to community and place, the benefits and impacts of community anchor organisations are not always recognised by local government and other funding bodies which support the wider third sector.

This paradox of diversity of activity and impact; and continued concerns amongst community anchor organisations with regard to sustainable funding was the key impetus for this piece of research, commissioned by North West Together We Can (NWTWC) and delivered by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). The research has sought to portray the key roles and benefits of community anchor organisations to their communities in the region together with analysing the challenges they face in the future in both delivery and strategic terms.

The research is framed in both the myriad of policy agendas and rhetoric aimed at the third sector from central government and the series of challenges currently facing our communities. In terms of policy agendas, the research recognises the potential role of asset transfer, partnership, commissioning and procurement in shaping third sector sustainability. In terms of challenges, the research additionally recognises the key role community anchor organisations can play in: tackling the very localised issues caused by economic recession; in reducing the democratic deficit that exists between decision makers and communities; in tackling community cohesion; and in improving local people's perceptions about the place in which they live.

Through a review of literature around community anchor organisations and in-depth case studies with the aforementioned organisations and a selection of their partners and service users, CLES has identified a number of significant roles for community anchor organisations in their localities and subsequently ten key ways and linkages in which community anchor organisations can deliver against some of the challenges facing contemporary society. The ten key ways are as follows:

Local economic development

- ❑ community anchor organisations can provide a range of activities which stimulate local monetary and social economies;
- ❑ community anchor organisations through volunteering opportunities can stimulate active citizenship and civic participation;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can deliver services on behalf of local government and other public service providers which both meet a local need and which offer value for money.

Local democratic renewal

- ❑ community anchor organisations can provide a forum and venue for neighbourhood focused discussions;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can support the activities and sustainability of other local voluntary and community groups;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can be involved strategically in decision making with the wider third sector and through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Community cohesion

- ❑ community anchor organisations can bring together diverse groups and those most marginalised in society;
- ❑ community organisations can provide both long and short term support across a range of themes for the most needy members of the community;

- ❑ community anchor organisations provide a base for the local community to engage with if they wish. This physical presence is often the key value of a community anchor organisation;

Place satisfaction

- ❑ community anchor organisations can improve the look, physical and green environment of a place thus contributing to increased satisfaction with neighbourhoods.

These delivery activities and roles do not come without their challenges. As is commonly the case with other types of third sector organisations encompassing infrastructure bodies, social enterprise and voluntary groups, funding is a perceived and very real challenge. Add to this the pressure to engage strategically in issues around asset transfer and procurement and it becomes very clear that running a community anchor organisation is not an easy task. Additionally, given reductions in public sector expenditure the challenge of organisational sustainability in the third sector is only going to become greater.

This research report therefore seeks to advocate, promote and demonstrate the values, roles and benefits of community anchor organisations to key strategic partners in the region and centrally.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The prevailing policy context

The recession of 2009 has reinvigorated policy debate around how we, as a country, respond to issues of economic and specifically labour market change at the local level, how we reduce the democratic deficit, how individuals and communities shape their own destiny, and how we avoid issues of civil unrest and incohesion. What we have seen in response is a series of top down interventions including the bail out of the banking system, public money being ploughed into industrial growth, and targeted jobs funds.

What we have not necessarily seen in policy terms in many localities is the use of existing community focused mechanisms to not only shape economic change and recovery but also to activate communities and promote a sense of civil society. Community anchor organisations are one such mechanism which can be used to support those in need, promote active citizenship and stimulate local economic recovery.

Community anchors organisations are viewed as key assets in the Government's place-shaping agenda. Not only are they very much part of their community and neighbourhood based and thus key components for capacity building and neighbourhood renewal; but they are also viewed as key deliverers of social capital and active communities.

Government have to a degree recognised the capacity building and social capital values of community anchor organisations, reflected in the myriad of policy developed and available since 2006 including the £70 million Communitybuilders programme. But, what of the wider role and impacts of these organisations. What is their role in creating strong local economies? What is their role in enabling community cohesion? And what is their role in democratic involvement?

1.2 About this research

This research commissioned by North West Together We Can (NWTWC) and delivered by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) aims to demonstrate the importance of community anchor organisations to communities and service delivery and particularly their values in relation to the three themes identified above: local economies; community cohesion; and democracy. The research also seeks to demonstrate explicitly the contribution and role community anchor organisations play in relation to National Indicator 4: '% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality'.

To understand these key roles and values we have undertaken an extensive policy and literature review around community anchor organisations. This has been supplemented by a series of discussions with community anchor organisations in the North West region which have resulted in five stand alone case studies demonstrating their roles. This draft report consists of the following sections:

- ❑ **section 2** – discusses what we mean by community anchor organisations and what their common characteristics are;
- ❑ **section 3** – provides a detailed policy review of the Government's agenda around community anchor organisations;
- ❑ **section 4** – assesses the generic contributions of community anchor organisations together with detailing some case studies from across England;
- ❑ **section 5** – details the five cases from North West England;
- ❑ **section 6** – assesses the key challenges facing the sustainability of community anchor organisations in the future;
- ❑ **section 7** – summarises by promoting the role of community anchor organisations in meeting the three key policy challenges.

2 WHAT ARE COMMUNITY ANCHOR ORGANISATIONS?

2.1 Defining community anchor organisations

The term community anchor organisation is a relatively new addition to the policy language around the voluntary and community sector. The voluntary and community sector already encompasses a number of typologies of organisation including: charities; community organisations; voluntary groups; social enterprise; and development trusts. For many of these classifications there has often been confusion as to how different organisations fit. The term community anchor is different and is based upon a solid definition of what they are, their overarching roles within the community, and the characteristics of their set up.

Community anchor organisations have been formally defined by the Community Alliance as¹:

'Community anchors are independent community-led organisations. They are multi-purpose and provide holistic solutions to local problems and challenges, bringing out the best in people and agencies. They are there for the long term, not just the quick fix. Community anchors are often the driving force in community renewal.'

2.2 The overarching roles of community anchor organisations

The Community Alliance states that such a definition encompasses a number of different types of anchor organisation, with the defining linking characteristic being that they are neighbourhood based and exist for a multitude of purposes. As such there are 5 key roles for community anchors within their neighbourhood:

- ❑ **role 1: a service provider** – community anchors provide local services for their community and also act as a gateway for supporting the local community to gain access to other services which they need;
- ❑ **role 2: a community financier** – community anchors have the facilities both directly and in support of other community groups to bring capital and opportunities into a neighbourhood. This can include from the local authority, external funders and other agencies;
- ❑ **role 3: a community advocate** – community anchors have a key role in brokering relations between communities and public bodies. Community anchors: act as a catalyst of change in public services and regeneration programmes; help people get involved in groups and have a say about local issues; and mobilise people to make their own democratic decisions;
- ❑ **role 4: a community infrastructure supporter** – community anchors support other community groups within a neighbourhood through capacity building, skills development and developing their involvement in local decision making;
- ❑ **role 5: a community empowerer** – community anchors encourage local people to engage with local decision making and strengthen active citizenship and civil renewal.

2.3 The characteristics of community anchor organisations

One of the key differences in definitional and characteristic terms between community anchors and other forms of the third sector structure is the fact that they have to have a base, building or asset within a community and one which is open to all the community. The Community Alliance also suggests that there are 8 key characteristics of a community anchor organisation:

- ❑ **characteristic 1: a base** – community anchors must own or manage a building or physical space which is community controlled, owned or led;

¹ Information in this section is derived from: community alliance (no date) *Transformation through community anchors*. <http://www.communitymatters.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/CrawlerResourceServer.aspx?resource=91B7E713-B3D9-45B8-A142-43C2CDAB8212&mode=link&guid=cfdd69b5f024a49a1ad9f4d5e7c1296>

- ❑ **characteristic 2: a focus on local need** – community anchors must provide a focus for services and activities that meet local need;
- ❑ **characteristic 3: a voice** – community anchors must be a mechanism through which local voices can be heard, needs identified, and for local leaders and community groups to be supported;
- ❑ **characteristic 4: a developer** – community anchors must provide a platform for community development, promoting intergenerational and community cohesion whilst also respecting diversity;
- ❑ **characteristic 5: a fosterer of community groups** – community anchors must be a base for and supporter of other community groups within the neighbourhood;
- ❑ **characteristic 6: a generator of income and displayer of benefit** – community anchors must provide a means of promoting community led enterprise and generating independent income whilst also having a social, economic and environmental impact;
- ❑ **characteristic 7: a forum for discussion** – community anchors must provide a forum for community discussion and the subsequent creation of community led solutions;
- ❑ **characteristic 8: a broker** – community anchors must provide a bridge between communities and the state which brings about social change.

2.4 The potential of community anchor organisations

Given the diversity of roles and characteristics outlined above it is clear that community anchor organisations have significant potential in promoting community development, in enabling community empowerment and supporting community renewal. As such, there is a clear potential defined role in addressing a number of critical agendas currently facing communities and neighbourhoods across the UK. These agendas are as follows:

- ❑ **agenda 1: local economic development** – the recession has created a number of challenges for communities. Not only has there been significant job losses and redundancies, but also the closure of local businesses and services, threatening the fabric of places and the well-being of communities;
- ❑ **agenda 2: community cohesion** – despite government investment and positive community work in tackling intergenerational and cultural mistrust, community cohesion or more adroitly community in-cohesion remains a significant challenge in many communities and neighbourhoods;
- ❑ **agenda 3: democratic involvement and decision making** – interest and trust in governmental institutions, including local government is at an all time low, as reflected in the results of the 2008 Place Survey. This is particularly evident around issues of local concern and decision making.

This research therefore examines and evidences further the role of community anchor organisations in addressing issues in relation to these three agendas and in contributing to reinvigorating local economies.

2.5 Other organisations working in the field

The notion of community anchor organisations is not new at the national level. Indeed the Office of the Third Sector and organisations like Community Matters, the Development Trusts Association, and bassac have long championed the merits of community anchor organisations and commented upon their effectiveness. This section of the report therefore seeks to summarise the core principles of these infrastructure organisations and the support they provide to community anchor organisations. It is important to state that all three organisations of Community Matters, the Development Trusts Association, and bassac have worked in partnership to develop the Community Alliance, a dedicated organisation committed to supporting community anchor organisations.

Community Matters

Community Matters is the nationwide federation for community associations and similar organisations, with nearly 1200 member organisations across the UK. Community Matters was originally established as the National Federation of Community Organisations in 1945 and has a key overarching role in promoting and supporting action by ordinary people in response to social, educational and recreational needs in their neighbourhoods and communities. Community Matters provide a range of services to member organisations including: events; policy research; administration of the Communitybuilders Fund; provision of specific advice and support; and local specific activities.

www.communitymatters.org.uk

Development Trusts Association

The Development Trusts Association (DTA) is a network of community practitioners. The core objectives of the Association are to help people set up development trusts and help existing trusts learn from each other and work effectively. Development Trusts are community owned and led organisations which through the community ownership of buildings and land seek to bring about long-term social, economic and environmental benefits in their community. The DTA also seek to influence government and others at national and local levels to build support for community enterprises. The DTA provides four core activities: campaigns; programmes; partnerships; and consultancy.

www.dta.org.uk

bassac

The British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (bassac) works to provide advice and guidance on issues affecting the community and voluntary sector. bassac have an overarching vision of neighbourhoods in which people thrive and fulfil their potential. They use the experience of member organisations to meet this vision through informing policy and advocacy activities in the aim of tackling poverty, social exclusion and inequality. bassac works in the following five programme areas to provide advice and guidance on key issues affecting the community and voluntary sector: collaboration; improving impact; leadership; sustainable development; and voice.

www.bassac.org.uk

Community Alliance

The Community Alliance is the partnership of the three above organisations and has a joint vision to have a community anchor organisation in every neighbourhood. The Community Alliance provides a wide range of services and products aimed at supporting strong and sustainable anchor organisations. At a national level the three organisations are cooperating on seven key projects:

- ❑ Promoting **Visible** as the main accredited standard for community anchors.
- ❑ **Anchors of Tomorrow**: exploring new approaches and models of delivery for the Community Anchor Organisations.
- ❑ **A Leaders of Tomorrow** programme to help current staff at anchor organisations develop into tomorrow's CEOs.
- ❑ **Voice**: helping Community Anchors to look strategically at their advocacy and campaigning activity.
- ❑ **The Healthcheck**: a quick way for new and emerging Community Anchors to benchmark their operational and management procedures.
- ❑ **Knowledge and Skills Exchange** to support peer learning.
- ❑ Assembling a national evidence base on effective community development approaches pursued by Community Anchors.

www.comm-alliance.org

3 POLICY REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Upon reflection of the present Government's time in power, tackling social exclusion and reducing disadvantage emerges as one of its most prominent ambitions. Indeed, over the last twelve years Government policy, coupled with numerous initiatives, have had the concept of tackling social exclusion through community empowerment at their heart. This has been particularly focused upon the most deprived areas in England with the development of initiatives such as the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and the New Deal for Communities programme, as well Community Empowerment Networks and other local forms of participative community initiative.

According to 'third way' ideology, building social capital and empowering citizens through a strong voluntary and community sector in particular is a means by which social exclusion can be tackled. This is underpinned by the belief that by empowering communities, individuals will become active citizens and be able to identify and alleviate social problems in their area. More recently, the value of community anchors, and the voluntary and community sector more broadly, has been extended to take into consideration other emerging agendas, such as 'community cohesion' and democratic renewal.

In light of this, in recent years we have seen a number of significant policy documents to have emerged from Government that deal with how the third sector and community anchors in particular, can be developed and supported. This review explores four policy themes relating to community anchors: reconnecting citizen and State; community development; asset transfer; and the role of the third sector; which emerge from this policy literature.

3.2 Theme 1: Reconnecting citizen and State

Published in 1998, the White Paper *'Modern Local Government: In touch with the people'*² outlined the present Government's aspiration to modernise local government and renew local democracy. It called for greater and more relevant accountability, responsiveness and representation and set out the newly elected Government's ideas for improving local democracy. These included more frequent local elections in order to strengthen direct accountability to local people by ensuring that 'voters in every area have greater opportunity to pass judgement on their local representatives' (p.3), and a duty for councils to 'consult local people about plans and services' (ibid).

Since the publication of the *'Modern Local Government'* White Paper back in 1998, this vision for the reconnection of citizen and State with a view to empowering communities and individuals has played out in a number of policy documents. The *'Local Government Act'*³ published in 2000, for example, legislated for the formation of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). LSPs are a partnership between the different parts of the public sector, with private business and the third sector, in order to deliver services more effectively.

The reformation of local government with the aim of empowering communities has remained a significant theme in the Government's rhetoric throughout its time in power. In July 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government published its Empowerment White Paper, entitled *'Communities in control: Real people, real power'*⁴, which set out the Government's plans on 'passing more and more political power to more and more people, using every practical means possible' (p.21).

More recently, following the release of the initial consultation paper, and the Government's long-awaited response to consultation published in November 2008⁵, the *'Local Democracy, Economic*

² Department for Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) *'Modern Local Government: In touch with the people'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/144890.pdf>

³ Office of Public Sector Information (2000) *'Local Government Act'* accessed at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *'Communities in control: Real people, real power'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/886045.pdf>

⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government & Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (2008) *'Prosperous Places: taking forward the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration – the Government's response to public consultation'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/citiesandregions/pdf/1073344.pdf>

*Development and Construction Bill*⁶ (LDEDC)⁶ was submitted to Parliament in December 2008. This wide-ranging legislation aims to give communities and local people new rights to have a say in their local services, strengthen local democracy, reform local and regional governance arrangements and implement measures to drive economic regeneration. Moreover, according to the Department for Communities and Local Government, at the heart of the *'Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill'* are new rights for the citizen to have more information and influence over the local decisions; new powers to hold politicians to account and, where they choose to, more opportunity to get directly involved in managing and shaping how local services are delivered.

According to the Government's rhetoric, third sector organisations, such as community anchors, can play a significant role in this process of reconnecting citizen and state. Indeed, the 2007 government report, *'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report'*⁷, observed that community organisations can 'act as a bridge between individuals and the state, providing opportunities for people to express their voices, building democratic engagement' (p.32).

Speaking in February 2009 at bassac's conference⁸, Sadiq Khan MP reaffirmed the Government's aspiration that through the *'Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill'*, 'ordinary people' can have a say in local issues. Khan went on to suggest that community anchors would be critical to making this happen as they provide 'that neighbourhood level hub that allows people to gather together, mobilise opinion, get more involved, feel more empowered and in control of local issues that affect them'. Moreover, Khan considered how community anchors can play a role in contributing towards other agendas, including promoting social capital: the networks, bonds and trust that enable communities to act together to pursue shared objectives. He suggests:

'The work of anchors build links between individuals and groups who often otherwise exist in separate worlds, bonding people together under a common cause of improving the neighbourhood in which they live.'

Furthermore, Khan reiterates the Government's view that community anchors can play an important role in promoting social inclusion, in that they aim to integrate the marginalised and vulnerable members of a community, helping to build a society that is open to contributions from all.

3.3 Theme 2: Community development

As illustrated above, empowering communities through connecting citizens with the State is a principle that runs through a number of policy documents to have emerged from Government over recent years. Connected to this aspiration is the increasing recognition of the role of community anchor organisations in community development.

Published in 2004 by the Civil Renewal Unit; *'Firm Foundations'*⁹ reports on the findings from a Government review of support for community development and capacity building. The review highlighted that Government will only achieve many of its objectives, including tackling social exclusion, if it more fully involves citizens and communities. According to *'Firm Foundations'*, this meant 'investing in successful efforts to build the skills, abilities, knowledge and confidence of people and community groups, to enable them to take effective action and play leading roles in the development of their communities' (p.3).

The report is significant in that it set out the key principles that were to underpin the Government's strategy to bring about change. This included adopting a community development approach, which is described as 'collective action to achieve social justice and change' (p.8). Community development is seen as playing a key role in encouraging social inclusion in that it helps draw often vulnerable and marginalised communities into the processes of change, therefore contributing towards the government's aspiration to renew local democracy¹⁰. Recognising and building on the assets and

⁶ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill 2008 accessed at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldbills/002/2009002.pdf>

⁷ HM Treasury & Cabinet Office (2007) *'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report'*, accessed at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7189/7189.pdf>

⁸ 'Reconnecting Citizen and State – community anchors', 26th February 2009, bassac conference 2009, accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/communities/communityanchors>

⁹ Home Office (2004) *'Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152480.pdf>

¹⁰ See Department for Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) *'Modern Local Government: In touch with the people'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/144890.pdf>

strengths already present in communities was also set out as a key principle. According to the report, this means recognising tangible assets such as buildings or land and 'soft' assets such as social networks and using them as a starting point for development and change; what is known as an Asset Based Community Development approach.

To achieve these principles of promoting community development and building on community assets and strengths, the Civil Renewal Unit identifies a number of key actions, including:

'The targeting of efforts to build strong, sustainable community anchor organisations which can provide a crucial focus and support for community development and change in their neighbourhood or community, and for the building up of the community sector' (p.4)

It was, therefore, with the publication of the *'Firm Foundations'* report that the notion of 'community anchors' first really came to prominence. The report set out the common features of community anchor organisations:

- ❑ they are controlled by local residents and/or representatives of local groups;
- ❑ they address the needs of their area in a multi-purpose, holistic way;
- ❑ they are committed to the involvement of all sections of their community, including marginalised groups;
- ❑ they facilitate the development of the communities in their area.

The value of third sector organisations, such as community anchor organisations, in promoting community development has continued to be a prominent theme in Government policy. In 2007 the Government published its report *'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report'*¹¹, which set out the Government's vision for the sector. The report made clear the potential for the sector in strengthening communities, suggesting that at the heart of 'active participation of communities in civil renewal and neighbourhood regeneration are community based organisations providing the platform not only to meet the needs of individuals but for empowerment of individuals to bring about transformation of communities' (p.32).

3.4 Theme 3: Asset transfer

'Firm Foundations' also set out a number of actions in order to help support and nurture community anchors. This included, as part of the Government's wider commitment to promoting the development and growth of social enterprise, facilitating the appropriate transfer of assets to community anchor organisations. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the value of asset transfer in community development and regeneration; particularly in terms of the potential for community organisations to take on the ownership and management of local assets in order to realise real gains for local communities.

The 2006 Local Government White Paper, *'Strong and Prosperous Communities'*¹², made reference to the community benefit of asset transfer, with the Government stating that they would 'introduce a fund to give local authorities capital support in refurbishing buildings to facilitate their transfer to community management and ownership' (p.171). This was followed in May 2007 with the publication of the Quirk Review¹³. This set out the benefits of local groups owning or managing community assets such as village halls, community centres, building preservation trusts and community enterprises. According to the Review, the community benefits of owning assets are many, and include:

- ❑ the creation of jobs for local people with the effect of increasing wealth in the community;

¹¹ HM Treasury & Cabinet Office (2007) *'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report'*, accessed at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7189/7189.pdf>

¹² Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *'Strong and Prosperous Communities'*, accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/152456.pdf>

¹³ Cabinet Office (2007) *'Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/321083.pdf>

- ❑ restoring community assets to productive use, that directly addresses current local needs, can give a significant psychological boost to local communities giving them a new hope in their future;
- ❑ the new use of existing land or facilities can have a powerful multiplier effect. It can restore confidence in that place, it can restore the viability of local businesses and it can help to reverse the exodus of residents and businesses;
- ❑ asset ownership can have a major effect in building community confidence and a sense of worth;
- ❑ the surpluses generated by the assets remain in the community;
- ❑ asset-based, community anchor organisations with a broad community remit and a multipurpose function can play a powerful role in promoting community cohesion by bridging the ethnic, faith and other divisions that may be present in communities, and promoting mutual understanding and harmony.

Since the publication of the Quirk Review, the Government has maintained its interest in the agenda. For example, the Government has introduced a new programme, 'Advancing Assets for Communities', led by the Development Trusts Association which aims to support local authorities and their community partners to develop joint plans for asset transfer. In July 2008, Communities and Local Government published its Empowerment White Paper, entitled '*Communities in control: Real people, real power*'¹⁴, which set out the Government's plans on 'passing more and more political power to more and more people, using every practical means possible' (p.21). While the Government has not translated many of the White Paper's recommendations into legislation, one idea that has taken hold is that of the new Asset Transfer Unit. Led and managed by the Development Trusts Association, the Asset Transfer Unit¹⁵ is funded by Communities and Local Government and aims to empower local people and organisations to transform land and buildings into vibrant community spaces.

3.5 Theme 4: The role of the third sector

'The third sector' commonly refers to organisations which do not fall under the umbrella of government, public sector or private businesses. The sector includes not-for-profit groups such as charities, voluntary and community groups and also trading organisations such as social enterprises and co-operatives. 'Community anchor organisation' is another concept that has joined the terminology that is associated with the third sector, adding another layer of complexity. Indeed, some argue that the increasing terms of reference and the 'institutionalisation' of the sector clouds third sector organisations' core role.

Running in parallel with the emergence of new terminology, in recent years we have witnessed a growing emphasis on the role of the third sector in society and in service delivery in particular. Indeed, we have seen a number of specific measures implemented across government departments working towards the development of a more sustainable sector, with the aim of enabling VCS organisations to become more efficient, effective and better placed to identify and deliver services to the community.

In the last ten years, we have witnessed a plethora of policy documents that highlight the value of VCS organisations. In 2002, HM Treasury published the landmark report '*The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery*'¹⁶. The report recognised that VCS organisations have a key role to play in the government's vision for public service investment and reform.

July 2007 saw the publication of the HM Treasury report '*The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report*'¹⁷ in which the Government set out its findings from a

¹⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) '*Communities in control: Real people, real power*', accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/886045.pdf>

¹⁵ See <http://atu.org.uk/>

¹⁶ HM Treasury (2002) '*The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery*' (HMSO: London) accessed at: <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/CCRVolSec02.pdf>

¹⁷ HM Treasury (2007) '*The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report*' (HMSO: London) accessed at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/thirdsectorreview_finalreport.pdf

review of the third sector, setting out a strategy to work with third sector organisations to promote social and economic regeneration. By October 2007, with the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Government had designated £515 million to the Office of the Third Sector for 2008-11 to invest in third sector programmes. This included:

- ❑ over £85 million for Capacitybuilders for third sector infrastructure development;
- ❑ up to £65 million for Futurebuilders, bringing the total projected value of all loans, grants and loan guarantees under the management of the fund to £215 million by 2011.

The strategy also set out the Government's proposals for improving their engagement with the third sector, including 'supporting sustainable investment in community anchors' (p.6). The strategy also considered how developing community anchors can help to build greater enterprise and sustainability across the sector, in particular through the transfer of assets to community ownership and management, and through the expansion of earned revenue. This builds on the findings of the Quirk Review¹⁸, published in May 2007, which set out the benefits of local groups owning or managing community assets such as village halls, community centres, building preservation trusts and community enterprises.

Similarly, the *'PSA Delivery Agreement 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities'*¹⁹ (2007) once again highlighted the value of community anchors for promoting active and empowered communities, with the Government stating it would invest in them in order to enable 'greater sustainability in organisations, including use of mainstream regeneration funding to develop sustainable social enterprise solutions' (p.8).

3.6 Policy summary

The aim of this policy review was to provide a thematic overview of Government policy related to community anchors. It demonstrates how community anchors relate to a wide range of interconnected policy themes: reconnecting citizen and the state; community development; asset transfer; and the role of the third sector. Promoting community empowerment, particularly through Asset Based Community Development is clearly a significant theme of the Labour party's approach to tackling social exclusion, with community anchors especially having an increasingly significant role. A tabular summary of contemporary third sector policy is detailed in Appendix 1.

A further policy agenda which community anchor organisations need to be aware of is that of commissioning and procurement. As grants and core funding from local government become scarcer, the third sector, including community anchor organisations are going to be increasingly required to compete for service contracts. The question is what types of service contracts can community anchor organisations effectively bid for. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, the community anchor organisations case studies in this research deliver an array of services. Commissioning and procurement will be of different levels of importance dependent upon the organisation in question. Those with particularly niche activities may need to be specific about their service delivery bids. Those with sustainable funding already for a range of provision may not be required to bid for contracts at all.

¹⁸ Cabinet Office (2007) *'Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets'* accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/321083.pdf>

¹⁹ HM Government (2007) *'PSA Delivery Agreement 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities'* accessed at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa21.pdf

4 THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY ANCHOR ORGANISATIONS

Case study research by the Community Alliance and other organisations has been effective in demonstrating the types of community anchor organisations that there are in England and their overarching roles. This research will now delve a little further into these roles and seek to demonstrate some of the core contributions in economic, social, democratic and environmental terms of community anchors to their communities and beyond.

4.1 The cross-cutting contributions of community anchor organisations

There are a number of key cross-cutting inherent contributions or benefits of community anchor organisations to their communities and beyond. These include:

As a provider of a community space

The core benefit of community anchor organisations is that they provide a space in which communities can interact, access service provision, and contribute toward wider decision making. The notion of space is crucial to community anchor organisations. Assets owned and managed by the community can provide a range of services and can realise a host of economic, social and community benefits. Asset transfer is increasingly important for community anchor organisations.

As a taker of risks for the community

Community enterprise, infrastructure development and ownership of assets is a risky business. Having an organisation in the form of a community anchor taking on the management of an asset removes some of the risk away from the community and potentially provides a long term investment in a place, something which is not guaranteed through special initiatives.

As a provider of multi purpose and holistic services

Community anchors often provide an array of services and don't focus upon a specific niche. This means that, unlike some service provision in the public and private sectors, the service offer of community anchor organisations is open to reflective needs of all members of the local community and not necessarily the most marginalised or those with the greatest voice.

As a contributor to neighbourhood level place shaping

There has been significant policy guidance and documentation in recent years advocating the role of local authorities as coalitions of partners including the third sector and as shapers of place. Place shaping cannot however be just a local authority boundary based phenomenon. Place shaping needs to occur at the very local or neighbourhood levels. Community anchor organisations, as recognised neighbourhood bodies, can act as drivers of very local community renewal and neighbourhood level place shapers.

As a purveyor of trust

The recent announcement of the results of the 2008 Place Survey²⁰ revealed unprecedented levels of public mistrust in the ability of public services to deliver and in the democratic process. Yet, contradictorily the vast majority of respondents to the survey were happy with the area in which they lived. Community anchors can be viewed as a key contributory factor to this very local level happiness. In many localities community anchors have been in operation for many years. This has developed trust amongst communities that anchors are there for the long term and are committed to local change.

As a social glue for a place

The recession has changed the physical fabric of many of the United Kingdom's places. Community shops and pubs have closed down leaving communities particularly in the most deprived areas lacking a social glue. Additionally, given the current emphasis upon public spending cuts, these areas could face the double whammy of the loss of services. In this scenario, community anchor organisations have a key role to play in keeping communities together and provide a base through which services can be provided.

²⁰ Communities and Local Government (2009) *Place Survey 2008, England*.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1262542.pdf>

4.2 The economic contributions of community anchor organisations

Community anchor organisations provide a number of economic contributions or benefits for the communities which they serve and beyond. These include:

As rejuvenators of run-down assets

Recent years has increasingly seen due to the need for efficiency savings the closure of local authority run community assets such as community centres and leisure facilities. The Quirk Review of 2007 called for a greater transfer of these types of assets to community organisations. Transfer of assets not only ensures the rejuvenation of the physical fabric of place but also provides a space for the development of the social fabric. Transfer of assets to community anchor organisations potentially reinvigorates run-down facilities and supports the growth of local economies.

As utilisers of Government empowerment funding

The Government through the Office of the Third Sector has placed increasing emphasis in recent years upon the third sector as service deliverers and community empowerers, notably through the 2008 Empowerment White Paper. Programmes such as CommunityBuilders which is worth £70 million are directly targeted at community anchors to foster change in their locality. Community anchors have a key responsibility to their communities to effectively spend this funding.

As responders to global economic challenges

As a result of the recession and other economic factors, local economies are facing a host of challenges when it comes to redundancies, unemployment, insolvencies and business development. Community anchors as a result of their multi-purpose approach to community development are well-placed to offer many of the services and support required by communities in response to recession. The public sector clearly cannot deal with all the challenges presented by recession. Public sector activities need to be balanced with community sector interventions which respond to changes when they happen and where they happen.

As generators of community capital and finance

The added value of well established community anchor organisations is that they are not completely reliant upon public sector funding to generate income. A community base is a strong mechanism for raising funds through room hire and sporting facilities for example. Indeed the greatest impact a community anchor organisation can have is when it moves beyond existing public sector activity and generates new revenue streams to support the meeting of community needs.

As economic and social regenerators of place

Community anchor organisations can be particularly effective in areas where both public and private sector activity and facilities are limited. These areas pose the greatest opportunities for asset transfer and potentially the quickest wins in economic regeneration terms as any new community anchor and enterprise is likely to generate local employment. The swift acquitting of assets by community anchors can additionally lead to wider local economic benefits including rising land values. This not only benefits local communities but also contributes to addressing issues of market failure, responding to issues that other organisations cannot do.

Community Anchor example 1 – Community Links²¹

Community Links which is based in Newham in East London has a specific aim of tackling the social exclusion of people living in the Borough. They do this by running an array of services relating to benefits advice, community development, estates, and children and youth amongst others and through supporting local people to have a voice in local decision making and service provision.

As business and enterprise multipliers

The role of community anchor organisations is not just to provide a space in which communities and community groups meet and interact; it is a space in which communities can learn new skills and develop livelihoods. The ability to create further community enterprise and business is one of the

²¹ community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

core values of community anchors. They can both encourage other people within the community to become entrepreneurial and provide a space for business incubation and support.

Community Anchor example 2 – Blacon Community Trust²²

Blacon Community Trust is a community anchor organisation based in Chester in North West England. As well as running social and support groups for families and young people, Blacon Community Trust also runs a range of initiatives to help local people set up in business. The initiatives are a direct result of the Trust identifying that very few businesses were setting up in the neighbourhood. Blacon Community Trust have recently acquired a building, the Dee Point Enterprise Centre, which provides office accommodation and training rooms for new local businesses.

As physical regenerators of place

As well as being economic and social regenerators of place, community anchor organisations can provide the impetus for larger scale physical development. Two key examples of this type of activity are the Eldonian Village in Merseyside and Coin Street in London which have used the basis of a community anchor organisation to stimulate a larger scale physical renewal of the place including the development of housing and further community facilities.

Community Anchor example 3 – Coin Street²³

Coin Street Community Builders is a community anchor organisation which seeks to make the South Bank of London a better place in which to live, to work and to visit. Coin Street is an example of a community anchor organisation which has been in operation for a significant period of time. As well as providing a range of community activities, Coin Street Community Builders have overseen the completion of physical renewal including gardens, a riverside walkway and 220 new homes for people in housing need.

4.3 The social contributions of community anchor organisations

Community anchor organisations provide a number of social contributions or benefits for the communities which they serve and beyond.

As community owned assets

One of the core characteristics of community anchors is that they should be owned and controlled by local residents and the representatives of local groups. The sense of community ownership is important and not only provides community respect for an asset but also provides a mechanism through which communities can get a say in wider decision making and service delivery.

As reachers to the most marginalised in society

'Hard to reach' is a term commonly used in the public policy terrain. Yet no-one should be hard to reach, so long as the correct mechanisms are in place to engage and empower. Community anchors through their very neighbourhood focus are a key mechanism in supporting the most marginalised in society. They can act as a venue through which different groups can meet, interact and learn.

As a hub for the community

Community anchors are not just a building within a neighbourhood or locality, nor are they simply a service provider. They instead play a role as a facility for a wider community network and hub. They are a hub that can join together a number of networks including service users, residents, other voluntary and community organisations, the local authority and the private sector. In many instances they can act as the bridge between the community and local government.

²² community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

²³ community alliance (no date) *Engaging communities: transformation through community anchors.*
www.kcsc.org.uk/Asp/.../File/.../Community_Anchors_pres.ppt

As a vocational training provider and empowerer of young people

Community anchor organisations often have a key role to play in providing activities for disenfranchised young people to promote more positive lifestyles and more active involvement in the local community. Community activities through community anchors can also lead to the provision of vocational and other types of training courses relating to ICT and other professions.

Community Anchor example 4 – Lonsdale Community Centre²⁴

The Lonsdale Community Centre, based in West Hull has been seeking to change the lives of local people for over 25 years. They have a particular focus upon young people who are not attending school and have, in consultation with the young people themselves, started running vocational training courses, with the help of schools and other organisations. The focus is upon stopping the young people from drifting through life and ensuring positive outcomes in relation to future happiness and well-being.

As community morale boosters

The beauty of community anchor organisations is that they are often neighbourhood based. If people are in need of support this often requires a trip into town to see the local authority or elsewhere. With this however comes a range of barriers relating to transport, mobility, trust and other factors. Community anchors through their array of services can therefore act as a one stop shop for people in the neighbourhood who are not confident enough or able to seek support from the authorities.

Community Anchor example 5 – Sidley Community Association²⁵

The Sidley Community Association in East Sussex has been supporting the local community since 1949. The Sidley Community Association is effectively a lifeline which local people turn to when they are in a crisis or they don't know how to cope with their problems. The trained staff talk to the local residents and point them towards sources of further support.

As creators of community cohesion

Related to the value around marginalisation, community anchors have a key role to play in communities experiencing intergenerational mistrust and cultural and diversity issues. Community anchors can act as medium through a range of services, activities and networks, by which different sectors of the community can be brought together to create cohesion.

Community Anchor example 6 – Barton Hill Settlement²⁶

The Barton Hill Settlement is based in an area of Bristol which has a very diverse community where people of different backgrounds and cultures can find it difficult to communicate with each other. The Barton Hill Settlement has utilised a range of techniques to try and overcome these issues with a strong emphasis upon communicating themselves with every member of the community to see what types of activities the community actually want them to provide.

As supporters of older people

Community anchors can provide specific support to older people to tackle loneliness and other issues such as mobility. Being based in the community is a strong value of community anchor organisations and they can provide activities which both provide social opportunities for older people and which importantly enable them to live in their own home for longer.

²⁴ community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

²⁵ community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

²⁶ community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

Community Anchor example 7 – Retford Action Centre²⁷

The Retford Action Centre which is based in a rural area of Bassetlaw in the East Midlands has a particular emphasis upon helping older people. Activities include lunch clubs and dance classes all of which are supported by a voluntary taxi service in an area badly served by public transport. As well as providing social opportunities for older people, the Retford Action Centre also runs services relating to older people's housing needs. This includes accommodation assessments and benefit advice.

4.4 The democratic contributions of community anchor organisations

Community anchor organisations provide a number of democratic contributions or benefits for the communities which they serve and beyond.

As a broker of community – councillor – agency – officer relations

One of the core roles for community anchor organisations, as described by the Community Alliance, is as brokers between communities and public bodies. In an era where there is a significant democratic deficit, this role is increasingly important. The brokerage role is particularly important during periods of regeneration in a community and also where local authorities are seeking to transfer assets to community organisations. Asset transfer particularly requires political will, managerial imagination and business focused approaches from both the public and community sectors. They also, through this role, provide a strong voice for the community.

As facility managers

Community anchor organisations through asset transfer can take on the ownership of and manage assets previously owned by the local authority. This actual ownership of a physical space is important in relation to the sustainability of the organisation but also in terms of the democratic process required. Asset transfer needs to be a two way relationship and both democratically and financially viable. Local authorities in particular need to understand the community anchor organisation and particularly its economic, social and community benefit.

As facilitators of community decision making

It is important to recognise that community anchor organisations do not just provide a physical base or just services. They additionally provide a space in which different community groups can meet and discuss key issues. This infrastructure role is increasingly important in the partnership based cultures of localities through Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. Community anchors can support the facilitation of community dialogue with local authorities around community needs, regeneration initiatives, and participatory budgeting for example.

Community Anchor example 8 – Cambridge House²⁸

Cambridge House is a community anchor in South London which provides local community groups with accommodation for hot-desking, offices and a range of meeting and activity rooms, support services, mentoring, skills development, access to funding, partnerships and training.

As participatory and non-participatory mechanisms

Community anchors can be viewed as both participatory and non-participatory mechanisms. Whilst they provide a key service and activities to people who the community anchors actively engage with, they are also often viewed as valuable by people who don't use services but are aware of their impact in their community. They particularly recognise their role in creating a sense of community and value the work they do in executing collective responsibility for the vulnerable in society.

As a champion of the neighbourhood

There is a recognition that whilst within neighbourhoods and marginalised communities there is a great deal of community activity that much of this unseen and taken for granted. Related to this,

²⁷ community alliance (2007) *An ever-evolving story: how community anchor organisations are making a difference.*
http://www.redpencilprojects.co.uk/documents/An_ever_evolution_story.pdf

²⁸ community alliance (no date) *Engaging communities: transformation through community anchors.*
www.kcsc.org.uk/Asp/.../File/.../Community_Anchor_pres.ppt

there is no one identified person, agency or organisation that has as their job the responsibility to champion the neighbourhood. Community anchor organisations do have the attributes to take on this role of neighbourhood champion. They engage with communities in ways in which the public and private sectors are unable to do so at the neighbourhood level.

5 CASE STUDIES OF COMMUNITY ANCHOR ORGANISATIONS IN THE NORTH WEST

Section 4 provided a strategic overview of some of the generic contributions and benefits of community anchor organisations, evidenced with case studies from across England. There are however numerous examples from across the North West region of community anchor organisations which are providing significant local economic, democratic, and service delivery benefit for the communities which they serve. The following section of this report therefore seeks to demonstrate this benefit through five case studies. The case studies have been selected in consultation with North West Together We Can and provide one example of a community anchor organisation from each of the sub-regions of the North West (Greater Manchester; Merseyside; Cheshire; Lancashire; and Cumbria). The proforma utilised when interviewing the case study community anchor organisations is detailed in Appendix 1.

5.1 Case Study 1 – SPARTH Community Centre (Rochdale, Greater Manchester)²⁹

5.1.1 About SPARTH Community Centre

The SPARTH Community Centre was opened in the mid 1980s as a venue in which different cultures of the local Sparth community could interact and participate in a range of activities. The SPARTH Community Centre is based in Sparth, a small neighbourhood of around 300 homes in the Milkstone and Deepish ward of Rochdale. In demographic terms, around 60% of the households are Pakistani, with the remainder housing a large Irish community and an indigenous white community. This diversity of culture was one of the founding reasons for the formulation of the SPARTH Community Centre. Residents from these three demographic groups came together with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to develop a community facility that met the needs of all members of the community.

The development of the SPARTH Community Centre was initially funded through the Urban Programme which contributed towards building the Centre and enabled a full time community worker to be employed to run it. Many of the initial residents which drove the development of the Centre remain as part of its management committee today.

5.1.2 The activities offered by SPARTH Community Centre

In 2009, the SPARTH Community Centre offers a range of activities for both members of the local Sparth community and for people from across wider Rochdale. The diversity of the services, activities and facilities of the SPARTH Community Centre make it a true community anchor. Current activities include:

- ☐ stay and play sessions;
- ☐ a nursery;
- ☐ an after school club delivered in partnership with the local authority;
- ☐ a girls' group delivered in partnership with the local authority;
- ☐ a Saturday club delivered in partnership with the local authority;
- ☐ a youth club delivered in partnership with the local authority;
- ☐ an older people's luncheon club;
- ☐ a Friday dance group;
- ☐ the facilitation of an area forum;
- ☐ CV preparation and jobs brokerage services;
- ☐ room hire;
- ☐ form filling.

5.1.3 Funding the SPARTH Community Centre

The SPARTH Community Centre receives a core grant from Rochdale MBC which contributes towards staffing, maintenance and other running costs. As with any small community anchor organisation, other areas of income and funding are required to enable the sustainability of the Centre. SPARTH Community Centre is very proactive in seeking funding and grants opportunities. Given the diversity of activities on offer, grants bids are often put in by individual groups such as the youth group, as

²⁹ This case study is based on an interview with Kenny Farrar from the SPARTH Community Centre. For further information about the SPARTH Community Centre visit: <http://www.sparthcommunitycentre.co.uk/>

opposed to the Centre as a whole. In recent times the SPARTH Community Centre has received health grants, community foundation grants and other targeted and specific grants. The SPARTH Community Centre is also a strong advocate of partnership. They work in partnership on a range of their activities with organisations such as: the local authority; Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale; St Vincent's Housing Association; Jobcentre Plus; and many more organisations.

5.1.4 The role of the SPARTH Community Centre in the community

The SPARTH Community Centre is a community anchor organisation which provides a number of activities for the community of SPARTH. As such this diversity of offer means that the organisation plays a number of roles in the local community:

As an enabler of community cohesion

The principle of community cohesion has always been a strong driver of the delivery activities of the SPARTH Community Centre. The very fact that the initial steering group for the Centre contained members of the local Pakistani, Irish, and White populations is important. This diversity enabled a centre to be developed, that engaged with and provided activities for all sectors of the local community. Contemporary activities all seek to bring together different parts of the community.

As a space for democratic involvement

In an era of democratic deficit and mistrust in political decision making, the SPARTH Community Centre plays an important role in linking local residents to councillors and council officials. Every three months, the SPARTH Community Centre hosts an Area Forum, whereby the local community can discuss local issues and needs with the local authority, councillors and other partner organisations. The fact that the SPARTH Community Centre is a physical base for this type of forum is crucial to the process of democratic renewal. Additionally, the SPARTH Community Centre is a place where people feel they can discuss issues in a comfortable surrounding. The SPARTH Community Centre has also historically been a base from which Rochdale MBC has undertaken consultation around planning policy and in particular regeneration initiatives. This has fostered strong relationships between the Centre and the local authority.

As a meeting space and contributor to other groups' sustainability

The SPARTH Community Centre acts a space where other local community groups can meet. Rooms and facilities can be rented out and other organisations which currently use the facilities include Rochdale Army Cadets and the Rochdale Playgroup Association. Whilst sustainability of income is important for the SPARTH Community Centre, they are flexible upon payment for the use of facilities, particularly for organisations with a similar ethos and who might be struggling as a result of the recession.

As a capacity builder

The staff of the SPARTH Community Centre's role is not just to keep the Centre running and sustain activities for the community but also to engage strategically with the wider voluntary and community sector and the local authority. SPARTH Community Centre works closely with Rochdale CVS and sits on the Voluntary Sector Partnership Group which feeds into the Local Strategic Partnership. This strategic involvement gets the name of the SPARTH Community Centre known and also enables them to keep abreast of policy developments locally.

As a community supporter with a long term presence

The SPARTH Community Centre's core role as a provider of a diversity of activities is underpinned by a commitment to supporting local people individually and collectively. The SPARTH Community Centre is a place where local people can come for support on a wider range of issues be it around employment, education or benefits. The support offered to individuals is not a one-off but is available for the long-term. The SPARTH Community Centre has been supporting the local community for over 20 years and as such has enabled both trust and credibility.

As a space for community activism

As well as having a small staff team, the SPARTH Community Centre also has a significant number of volunteers. Many of these volunteers have previously been involved in the Centre as participants meaning that the Centre is successful in both empowering communities, in enabling community cohesion and in fostering active citizenship.

5.1.5 The benefits of the SPARTH Community Centre

The SPARTH Community Centre is a people focused organisation. It provides a series of benefits for local communities in terms of: providing community focused activities; in empowering and activating citizens; in providing a space for groups and discussion; and in supporting individual and collective needs. In addition to these direct benefits, there are a host of indirect ones that can be attributed to the Centre.

Firstly, the activities offered by the Centre provide a host of benefits for individuals in terms of the development of learning and life skills, particularly around parenting and looking after their family.

Secondly, some of the specific activities around CV development and jobs brokerage for example contribute to developing employability skills and getting a job, thus contributing to employment, skills and education outcomes.

Thirdly, the ethos of the SPARTH Community Centre is that the community centre is very much for the service users and that it should be led and run by the community themselves. This fosters a sense of community ownership and pride in the facility.

Fourthly, the SPARTH Community Centre changes lives. It provides a significant benefit to both the younger and older people that use the facilities and through its emphasis upon providing long term support if it is needed.

The benefits of the SPARTH Community Centre to the local community are well respected and understood by local elected officials. An elected member for the Milkstone and Deepdish ward stated that the Centre was an excellent example of community cohesion in practice. Given the tight knit nature of the SPARTH neighbourhood the Centre is a lynchpin for the local community.

5.1.6 Strategic relations

The SPARTH Community Centre has very strong links with Rochdale MBC. This is for two prime reasons. Firstly, Rochdale MBC are very appreciative of the activities which the SPARTH Community Centre provides. They are viewed as a key community asset by both strategic stakeholders and communities alike. It delivers a range of activities which are complementary to mainstream service delivery in regeneration, youth and community service areas. Secondly, the SPARTH Community Centre works closely with the local authority, keeping them updated of activities and sitting on theme groups of the Local Strategic Partnership. The Centre also has good relationships with local elected members, often because of their independence and their commitment to the neighbourhood and local community. They also work closely with a range of partners and also with other community centres in other areas of Rochdale in order to improve support and funding for the sector.

5.1.7 Challenges for the future

Sustainability of funding is the core future challenge for the SPARTH Community Centre. This includes funding received through core grants, through service delivery contracts, through external funding, and through income generation. As local authorities come under increasing pressure to make efficiency savings and as grants for the third sector continue to erode into a system of commissioning and contracting it will become increasingly necessary that the SPARTH Community Centre considers these agendas. There is a particular drive in local government towards commissioning for third sector delivery. SPARTH Community Centre will continue to follow this agenda but will also continue their focus on bidding for grants for specific groups and activities.

The efficiency agenda may inevitably lead to cuts in grants for community centres and the wider voluntary and community sector. SPARTH Community Centre may well therefore have increasing demand upon their services as other centres and third sector activities close. The sustainability of other sources of funding and the continued support of volunteers will be crucial to meeting this demand.

Commissioning will become an increasingly important agenda for third sector organisations in Rochdale. The local authority is committed to moving from a grants focus to a commissioning process. The core grant received by the SPARTH Community Centre will however remain for the foreseeable future and will continue to be monitored by local Councillors. SPARTH will however need

to keep an eye on the commissioning process and take heed of the need to be more business like and effectively promote community delivery activities. The current economic climate is also perceived by strategic stakeholders to be a key challenge for community anchor organisations.

5.2 Case Study 2 – Ulverston Ford Park Community Group (Ulverston, Cumbria)³⁰

5.2.1 About Ulverston Ford Park Community Group

Ford Park is Grade II listed house with surrounding land and outbuildings in Ulverston, Cumbria. Prior to its current use, it was owned by Cumbria County Council as an annexe to a local secondary school. In the late 1990s, the Council announced that they were going to sell Ford Park and fearing that the buildings and land would fall into the hands of private developers, a group of local people from Ulverston rallied together to save Ford Park for the community.

In the meantime, the buildings had become derelict and the fields and gardens overgrown. Because of this, the area became a site of anti-social behaviour. However, the group maintained their enthusiasm and opened Ford House as a community centre in June 1999. In 2005 they received funding for a feasibility study to demonstrate the potential of the site. Following the positive outcome of this study, the group had the confidence to purchase the site with the aid of a £220,000 Architectural Heritage Fund acquisition loan. Already a registered charity, prior to the acquisition of the building the group changed their constitution to become a Preservation Trust. The group recognised that Ford Park would need to establish a social enterprise in order to fund the mortgage payments and for the maintenance and development of the buildings and land.

Following the purchase of Ford Park, the group gained a Project Planning Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and developed an ambitious plan for the future of the buildings and land. In order to achieve this, they applied for a £1 million Heritage Lottery Fund Grant, but were unable to secure the necessary match funding. Since then, Ford Park has struggled to gain significant funding and now intends to scale down their development plan. They currently receive funding from the Lankelly Chase Foundation and hope to be successful in applying for the new Communitybuilders Fund.

Ford Park sees itself as having many of the characteristics of a community anchor organisation, for example they own assets and support local community groups. However it views itself first and foremost as a community group working to preserve a valuable community asset.

5.2.2 The role of the Ulverston Ford Park Group in the community

Ford Park's founding ambition was to restore and preserve the buildings and land for the benefit of the community. Further to this, Ford Park also performs the following key functions:

Empowering the community

Ford Park relies upon its team of dedicated volunteers. A number of the volunteers have particular social needs and are referred to Ford Park via a number of routes, including supported housing services and Jobcentre Plus. There are a wide range of activities at Ford Park that volunteers can get involved with, including gardening, administrative work, grounds management and assisting with events such as car boot sales and cultural activities such as music festivals and theatre productions. These activities promote community empowerment amongst Ulverston's disadvantaged communities.

A community infrastructure supporter

An important aspect of Ford Park's offer is that they act as a hub of local community sector activity. This is achieved by the renting out of rooms to community groups and also by actively brokering partnerships between local community groups to deliver projects or events. They are seen as a source of local information, often fielding telephone calls about local voluntary and community sector activity.

A provider of community space

Rooms are available to rent at Ford Park for community groups including Woodcraft Folk and Wildlife Watch, for activities including Ruskin lace making and yoga. Cumbria County Council is the main tenant, where it holds its day centre for adults with learning and other disabilities. Ford Park

³⁰ This case study is based on an interview with a member of the Ulverston Ford Park Community Group. For further information about the Ulverston Ford Park Community Group visit: <http://www.ford-park.org.uk/fordparkweb/default.htm>

Community Group also run a recording studio in the 'coach house' which, is used by around 80 young people a week, a number of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ford Park will soon be hiring out a room to an initiative that aims to help graduates with degrees in the creative industries increase their entrepreneurial skills.

5.2.3 The benefits of the Ulverston Ford Park Community Group

Ford Park offers a number of benefits to the community. First and foremost, without Ford Park community group there wouldn't be a park, therefore an important benefit is the safeguarding of green space. The volunteers at Ford Park have transformed the land and gardens from overgrown and unsafe to an attractive and appealing community space. Furthermore, through the provision of services that are on offer, such as the day centre, recording studio and, until recently, a Learndirect centre, it provides a valuable community resource.

Ford Park is particularly successful in reaching a wide range of community groups in Ulverston. Through the volunteering opportunities, individuals who may struggle to gain experience elsewhere due to learning difficulties and mental health issues are given a chance to learn new skills and socialise in a supportive environment and engage in growing plants, fruits and vegetables. One volunteer commented that coming to Ford Park was '*like freedom*'. Moreover, the volunteers are also valued for the contribution that they make to the maintenance of the grounds and gardens and the volunteering is seen as mutually beneficial. Ford Park therefore promotes community development in Ulverston.

An important aspect of Ford Park's work is to bring different members of the community together but also to connect groups with groups and groups with users. Ford Park has links with a number of local bodies including Barrow-in-Furness Jobcentre Plus, housing associations, and local schools. In acting as a community infrastructure supporter, Ford Park also helps to maintain a healthy local voluntary and community sector.

Ford Park believes that they make an important contribution towards the town's economic development, and that this could be enhanced if the potential of Ford Park could be fully recognised. The buildings and land are situated close to the Sir John Barrow monument, a significant local landmark and tourist attraction currently undergoing restoration. If Ford Park was given funding, it would be able to develop a social enterprise café and visitors' centre that would provide much needed facilities for the monument, thus enhancing the tourist offer.

5.2.4 Strategic relations

At present, there is limited contact between Ulverston Ford Park and Cumbria County Council and the Town Council. The County Council recognises the value of community anchor organisations and has developed two streams of strategy supporting rural village halls and also urban community centres. The County Council's Adult Services are the main tenant of Ford Park and, therefore, support Ford Park financially by way of the room hire. However, relations between Ford Park and the County Council have been historically challenging and there is a feeling by Ford Park that the County Council is not supporting it to the extent it would like it do. For Ford Park to fulfil its potential, its relationship with the Cumbria County Council will need to be developed.

5.2.5 Challenges for the future

One of the challenges for Ford Park lies in negotiating how it is perceived by the community. At present, it operates publicly in terms of allowing open access to the grounds, yet it is seen as private by the local authority, as such it is felt that is a sort of 'third space'. There is also a feeling that many members of the community do not have a clear understanding of what Ford Park is and by whom it is owned, many people assuming it is local authority owned. Due to the time that Ford Park lay derelict, some members of the community still think of the area as an unsafe place. Publicising the work of Ford Park to both the community and the local authority is, therefore, important. However, at present, there is not the capacity to do this.

A lack of funding is identified as the key challenge facing Ford Park and this threatens its sustainability and ability to establish new income streams, such as the idea for a café run as a social enterprise. Local planning policy has also proved to be a challenge in that Ford Park has been unable to sell off land for an enabling development in order to raise much-needed funds.

5.3 Case Study 3 – Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre (Preston, Lancashire)³¹

5.3.1 About the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre started out as a small terraced house in Preston with the aim of providing a place of worship for the Gujarati community who had migrated to Preston in the 1960s. However, there were obvious difficulties in not owning an asset, namely that the building could no longer accommodate the growing community. Following further waves of migration of Hindus from East Africa, by the 1970s it was necessary to look for more a capacious place of worship. Therefore in 1975 the Society purchased an old school building with the help of a bank loan and, with the assistance of volunteers, renovated the building making it a suitable site for worship. Some years later in the mid-1990s, the Society applied for Millennium Funding in order to develop the site and was successful, receiving a grant of £1.64 million. This was augmented by further donations from members of the Society. By 2000 the renovation of the building was complete. The Centre now sports an impressive prayer hall with ornate deities, as well as functional rooms, including another large hall.

Originally established to serve the spiritual and cultural needs of the Gujarati Hindu population of Preston, since its renovation the Centre has broadened its remit. While the Society's vision remains to maintain and promote the Hindu Dharma and cultural heritage, it also serves the wider community by providing a wide range of activities for a diverse range of individuals and groups. The Centre is not currently in receipt of any funding and gains its revenue via hiring out rooms as a social enterprise and also through donations from its members. There are currently five paid members of staff at the Centre, three of which work part-time hours. There is also a committee and a board of trustees, all of which are volunteers.

Whilst the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre was originally established as a place of worship, it has developed into an important hub of community activity. Indeed, the Centre now has many of the characteristics of a community anchor; for example, it owns its own assets, provides a range of services and activities to the community and acts as a community advocate.

5.3.2 The role of the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre in the community

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre performs a number of significant roles in the community, including:

Responding to a local need

First and foremost, the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre's core role is to provide a place of worship for Preston's Hindu population. The Temple is open 365 days a year and hosts various religious and cultural events throughout the year.

A service provider

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre delivers a wide range of services and activities to the local community, many of which are delivered by volunteers. These include: IT courses to boost computer literacy; yoga and gentle exercise for older people; hair and beauty courses; and Bollywood and Classical Indian dance classes. These activities aim to develop the skills and capacity of local residents and promote healthy lifestyles.

A community advocate

One of the key roles of the Centre is to act as a broker between the Hindu community and local public sector bodies. The Centre has strong links with Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Constabulary, with both bodies frequently holding events at the Centre. For example, 'Police and Communities Together' events which, aim to promote greater community engagement. The Centre is therefore an important link between the community and public sector bodies that might otherwise seem inaccessible.

A community developer

Through its provision of services, the Centre helps to raise the skills and capacity of the local community. Moreover, an important role of the Centre is to raise awareness about the Hindu faith

³¹ This case study is based upon an interview with a member of the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre. For further information about the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre visit: <http://www.ghspreston.co.uk/>

and promote understanding between communities in Preston. It does this through hosting school visits and welcoming visitors from all backgrounds to have educational tours around the prayer hall.

A provider of community space

As well as running a wide range of activities themselves, the Society also hires out rooms to various organisations in order to generate an income. These may be to large public sector bodies, such as the Environment Agency and Lancashire County Council, and also to groups such as Age Concern and the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

5.3.3 The benefits of the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre offers a number of benefits to the surrounding community. First and foremost, as noted above, the Centre's founding aim was to provide a place of worship for Preston's Hindu population, which remains the core function of the Centre. The Centre also strives to preserve Gujarati heritage by providing Gujarati language classes for children with the opportunity to gain GCSE qualifications. Furthermore, the Centre also serves to raise awareness of Hinduism and Indian culture by welcoming members of the community to cultural and religious festivals, for example the India's Independence Day celebrations on August 15th. The Centre has also played host to Lancashire Constabulary for their faith awareness training and welcomes regular visits from local schools. As such, a key benefit of the Centre is that it promotes cultural awareness, therefore helping to develop 'community cohesion'.

As well as promoting and maintaining religious and cultural heritage, through the delivery of activities and events the Centre also helps promote social inclusion. This is particularly important for older residents, many of whom use the Centre as an important site of social interaction with friends, most notably through the popular Luncheon Club. The Centre also provides individuals with an opportunity to get involved in volunteering, therefore promoting civic activism and raising individuals' skills. The Centre helps to promote healthy lifestyles, with exercise and dance classes on offer for people of all ages. For young people, the Centre provides an opportunity to get involved in positive activities such as volunteering and therefore helping to foster a sense of civic activism. By offering IT courses and ESOL classes (delivered by Lancashire College) the Centre serves to enhance the skills and therefore employability of individuals from the Gujarati community.

As well as activities run by volunteers, the Centre also plays host to numerous other local organisations who hire out the Centre's rooms and halls to deliver activities. This not only provides a steady income stream (which is used to fund the programme of activities) but also provides an opportunity for organisations to engage with the Gujarati community in an accessible environment. For example, every Monday there is a three hour 'job shop' facilitated by staff from Preston's TWL Centre (a training provider).

The Centre also plays a significant role in acting as an advocator, or a one point contact, between the Gujarati community and public sector bodies. This serves to help bodies such as Lancashire's County Council and Constabulary to enhance their community engagement and also provides an opportunity for the Gujarati community to get their voice heard.

5.3.4 Strategic relations

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre enjoys very good strategic relations with Lancashire County Council. While the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre is now economically self-sufficient, in the early years the County Council played an important role in supporting the Society with small grants. Today, the Society regularly hires out rooms to the Council for events and conferences, meaning that they are in regular contact. The Society also plays host to local councillors at cultural events and in return the County Council has invited members of the Society to visit the Council buildings. It is believed that this has helped to bridge the gap that can sometimes exist between local authorities and the community and help to promote a sense of civic involvement.

Lancashire County Council has developed a successful strategy for engaging with BME voluntary and community organisations, such as the Gujarat Hindu Society, called the Lancashire BME Pact³² which was formally launched in 2004. The Pact was formed to enable voluntary groups to come together to share best practice and to provide a voice for local BME communities. It is designed to initiate

³² For more on the Lancashire BME Pact, see: http://www.lancashire-bme-pact.org.uk/bme_pact.html

policy, provide structured support, co-ordinate delivery, identify models of encouragement, and to help partner organisations in meeting the need of the BME sector.

From Lancashire County Council's perspective, there are a number of challenges facing Preston's voluntary and community sector. Tightening budgets means that the County Council will be more restricted in terms of funding voluntary and community organisations and that in turn they will be required to become more self-sufficient and develop their own income streams, as has the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre. Whilst the Centre is in the fortuitous position of having a regular income through room hires (which highlights the benefit of asset-ownership), it also benefits from the commitment and support of the Gujarat community.

5.3.5 Challenges for the future

The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre is currently financially comfortable. Through hiring out rooms for conferences and events as a social enterprise it enjoys a regular income stream which is augmented by donations from worshippers. The Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre hopes to promote itself as a heritage building representing the Gujarati community in Preston and also aims to develop an Education Centre that will be registered to deliver accredited training and a Healthy Living Centre. In order to achieve these goals this additional funding will be required.

5.4 Case Study 4 – Four Estates Ltd (Runcorn, Cheshire)³³

5.4.1 About Four Estates Ltd

Four Estates Ltd is a volunteer-led community development company, operating across the Halton Brook, Murdishaw, Palace Fields and Hallwood Park areas of Runcorn, Cheshire. The key aim of the organisation is to improve the quality of life of people in their neighbourhoods (over 15,000 residents in total across the four communities), aspiring to break the cycle of disadvantage. They are a social enterprise, with the core business being the management of the Palace Fields Community Centre, Halton Brook Community Centre and the Hillcrest Centre in Halton Brook – these assets being located in two of the neighbourhoods, with a number of activities being undertaken across all four localities. The Hillcrest Centre houses the head office and a community training facility.

The roots of the organisation can be traced back to 1987/88 when the area was managed by the Runcorn Development Corporation, who met frequently with residents associations to discuss prevalent issues. The corporation handed over stock to Resident Social Landlords (RSL), with the Riverside Housing Association (RHA) being the dominant RSL. Community activists continued to meet with RHA, and there was an overriding theme regarding the lack of community centres, with requests made for the asset transfer of buildings into local centres. It was felt that community activities would benefit from a co-ordinated approach, thus a steering group put together a bid for lottery funding, and as a result Four Estates Ltd. was formed 12 years ago to co-ordinate the centres and activities, entering into a management agreement with RHA to manage the buildings – the steering group became a voluntary board. Lottery funding has been used to obtain a development manager and two community managers – one for youth activities and one for the Centres, together with other part time centre managers.

Formalising the structure was a positive move as people began to take the organisation more seriously. The view at Four Estates is that their job has been to make the activities as diverse as possible and reflect what the community wants, and they view their activities as being that of a true community anchor.

5.4.2 The role of Four Estates Ltd. in the community

As an enabler of community cohesion

One of the driving principles of Four Estates has been to develop activities that are for all sectors of the community, responding to the needs and wants of local people. They have been successful at engaging different groups of people at the grassroots level and have got to know the local population well. Halton Brook for example, has previously had particular problems with drugs, apathy and anti-social behaviour. Four Estates brought different elements of their community

³³ This case study is based upon an interview with Shelagh Kearney from Four Estates Ltd. For further information about Four Estates Ltd visit: <http://www.fourestates.co.uk/>

together to make a difference in their own neighbourhood through various activities – one of these was a two day project working with other agencies, which included painting and a ‘fun day’ for all age ranges, including police participation to engage with communities. This was then rolled out across the other three estates. This process of bringing together all elements of the community and the different stakeholders has proved to be successful in improving the area and also in empowering the communities.

As a space for community activism

Four Estates are particularly mindful of the need to produce the community activists for the future to ensure sustainability in the work that they do. One element of achieving this has been in the recruitment of a youth development officer through lottery funding and they ensure that young people are targeted from an early age. An example of the promotion of community activism has been through ensuring that children’s issues with stakeholders were addressed through a ‘question time’ format, where key stakeholders are questioned about issues that affect young people, and their organisations were urged to address these. This type of process is important in ensuring future activism throughout the communities.

As a capacity builder

A key part of the role of Four Estates has been to engage strategically with the wider community sector and with the local authority. They work with Halton Council and the LSP, ensuring that the importance of the work of Four Estates is registered across the key strategic stakeholders in Halton.

As a supporter of other community groups

In addition to the core activities undertaken by Four Estates, they also support other local community organisations in their activities. This includes providing assistance around financial accounting, ensuring that they are being run efficiently. Four Estates see this as important in helping all local partners operate effectively, and this also creates strong partnerships.

5.4.3 The benefits of Four Estates Ltd.

Four Estates Ltd. are an integral part of the communities that they represent. If they did not exist there would not be the increased cohesion that is evident across the communities. They are very much people focused in nature - providing spaces for meetings and discussion groups, supporting needs for individuals and wider elements of the community in general, and in promoting activism, cohesion and empowerment. A feature of cohesion promotion is the intergenerational projects carried out, one of which includes taking young people on visits to care homes to engage in activities with older people.

There are many opportunities afforded for social inclusion at all scales. For young people (aged eight and above) there are evening projects and activities, aimed as diversionary activities from potential anti-social behaviour, and the organisation also works closely with schools to deliver its agenda. Meeting rooms and IT suites are available for learning activities that residents may struggle to access elsewhere, and there is a focus upon health and well-being through sports and family activities for all ages and abilities and stop smoking support services.

Four Estates are also an important point of contact between the communities they represent and public sector bodies, such as Halton Council and Cheshire Police. Therefore they can act as an advocate for the community, allowing people to put across their opinions and concerns, and also for local public bodies to increase their own community engagement.

5.4.4 Strategic relations

There is a positive rapport between Four Estates Ltd. and Halton Council. They do feel valued by the Council and have a good working relationship – Halton do recognise Four Estates as a key partner and appreciate the gap that they fill within the community. However Four Estates do find the bureaucracy of the public sector frustrating but are often able to find ways to work around it.

They are also important for Halton Council’s LAA targets in regards to areas such as social inclusion, well-being and community safety, and work with the Council to ensure that targets are adhered to where possible (although as a social organisation they are not accountable to the Council). There is also a positive relationship with the LSP, who work with Four Estates closely. The LSP have funded one of the staff posts at Four Estates.

There is also the view that local and central government could do more to support the community anchors. Four Estates representatives would like to see less of what they term the ‘middleman’ which they believe often exist within bureaucracy, so support could be more direct, with a trust in anchor organisations to use the resources and bring tangible benefits to the community. There is a feeling that, by the time funding is filtered down through the different levels from central government, bureaucracy has taken over. There is also a related issue that those at the top need to begin to understand that anchors need core funding streams, not just smaller, unstable pots of capital which makes planning for community improvement more difficult.

The perspective from the Neighbourhood Management Team is that both they Four Estates and have worked together effectively to tap into communities – often a difficult process. They recognise that it has taken time to overcome certain issues and to build the relationship successfully. The reliance on funding pots is outlined as a key challenge for the future of VCS organisations, and a particular challenge for community anchors will be to justify their integrity and independence to their public funders – perhaps the need for such organisations to position themselves commercially may be a requirement in future.

With regards to wider strategic considerations, there is no actual ‘blueprint’ for the third sector in Halton. The majority of work is done through the LSP (which the Neighbourhood Management Team is part of), with a more ‘hands off’ role from the council itself.

5.4.5 Challenges for the future

There are a number of challenges that the organisation foresees in the future. One is the need to bring more skills to the voluntary board of Four Estates, helping it sustain its dynamic and broad ranging services and activities. Another is that they view themselves as being a social enterprise, but there is neither the time nor resources available at present to act like a typical social enterprise, which includes pursuing and earning more revenue, and being actively involved with the wider social enterprises community. This is something they feel may need to be a requirement for them in the future. Finally, funding is a major issue, with more core funding needed from government in order for them to continue their operations at the current scale.

5.5 Case Study 5 – Alt Valley Community Trust (Croxteth, Merseyside)³⁴

5.5.1 About Alt Valley Community Trust

The Alt Valley Community Trust (AVCT) is one of three social business partners who work in partnership in North East Liverpool, the others being the Neighbourhood Services Company (NSC) and NSC Training. Between them, these Croxteth based partners own a number of assets in the area and provide a range of services to the community. Each of the organisations officially operates separately, but work closely as one cohesive partnership, a clear synergy being integral to their success. The AVCT operates primarily as an education provider and community resource centre. It has developed a range of training courses and job opportunities through their innovative learning project, Communiversity.

Originally formed in 1987 to campaign against the closure of a local school, the AVCT has expanded to become a key player in the local community. Based in a former care home for older people bought from Liverpool City Council in 2000 through EU funding, Communiversity offers a broad curriculum, including vocational training in IT, Construction, Digital Design, and Mechanics. The building contains a theatre, recording studio, conference centre, café, crèche, and study support rooms. This lifelong learning centre is used by around 400 students in total throughout the year.

The developments from the partnership have also included the £2.5 million refurbishment of a local church into a 14-19 skills centre; development of a 100 acre working farm which links into healthy eating and in particular, a project for those with learning difficulties; a parade of local shops to develop and provide employment and training, which would otherwise be closed; and recently the opening of Neighbourhood Services Company’s Integrated Work and Training Centre, together with the purchase of a library and turning it into a sports/well-being centre.

³⁴ This case study is based upon an interview with Phil Knibb from the Alt Valley Community Trust. For further information about the Alt Valley Community Trust visit: <http://www.communiversity.co.uk/ContactUs.aspx>

The Neighbourhood Services Company is the trading arm of the partnership, with the aim of reducing unemployment and improving the local environment. The vision is to support the development of a sustainable community through the creation of long term employment and economic regeneration using the skills and commitment of local people to improve and regenerate their neighbourhood. They have contracts to maintain gardens, clear and maintain open spaces within residential areas and refurbish void properties in the North of the city, also bringing vacant properties back into use and providing good quality housing for residents within the Alt Valley area.

The partnership employs approximately 120 people and has a turnover of £4 million to £4.5 million per annum. AVCT and its partners see themselves as being a community anchor, and have been used as an example of an anchor in the past, owning several assets worth approximately £5 million.

5.5.2 The role of the Alt Valley Community Trust in the community

As an enabler of community empowerment

The partnership provides both learning courses and employment opportunities to local people across the age spectrum, through winning contracts for delivering activities such as skills provision. For example, the Alt Valley Skills Centre for 14-19 year olds includes courses in Art and Design, Hairdressing, Catering, Construction, Motor Mechanics and Performing Arts, among others. This vocational training offers a different style than that at schools, to suit individual needs. Free courses are also provided to adults, both working and unemployed, in key skills areas such as IT. Additionally, through competitive regeneration, solutions to local needs are provided through the partnership, using a locally trained skills base to offer value for money when bidding for contracts.

As a capacity builder

The partnership is crucial in engagement with the wider social sector and with the local council. AVCT is not there to provide everything but will often operate with other organisations, supporting them across the North East Liverpool area. Indeed, it works with, and supports, several other smaller community anchors across the city. AVCT sponsors work with key local community and youth centres, with a key element of its activities being creating and sustaining linkages, therefore developing capacity.

As a service provider

The partnership delivers a wide range of services to the local community in addition to the formal skills and employment provision. These include: women's and men's health awareness; healthy kids activity days; walking club; pre-school days; parenting support; teen health awareness events; and IT courses, among others. The aims of such activities are to increase life skills and healthy living, thus increasing overall quality of life.

As a meeting space

The Communiversity acts as a space where different community groups can meet. There are meeting and training facilities for hire which can hold from 2-200 people, including a conference suite, ICT suite, and other rooms. This service is provided in addition to the wide range of services provided, and acts to generate income.

5.5.3 The benefits of the Alt Valley Community Trust

The AVCT and its partners are very much community focused organisations, concentrating their activities on both the wider community and enhancing the welfare of individuals. They are vital to Croxteth and the North East Liverpool area in increasing quality of life and providing the platform for self sustainability within communities, with a business orientated approach, ensuring that local people can deliver services to the wider community. The activities of the partners lead to community empowerment and builds capacity.

In addition to the vocational skills training and employment provision, the full range of other services around community well-being and health awareness, IT courses, parenting support and others, increases social inclusion across all sections of the community.

The partnership is also an important buffer between the communities of North East Liverpool and Liverpool City Council and other public organisations. People are able to have their concerns taken up by this local representative body rather than attempting to go to the Council directly where the issues they have may not be addressed sufficiently.

5.5.4 Strategic relations

The AVCT has a positive relationship with Liverpool City Council, understanding that they would not historically exist without the work of the authority. However ACVT and its partners believe their current position is, primarily, as a result of their own actions, commitment and determination. There is a feeling by AVCT that the work and accomplishments of the partnership could be better understood by the Council as a whole. AVCT believes that, at a national level, there is not enough strategic direction in initiatives such as the Working Neighbourhood Fund.

With regards to LSPs, ACVT has had some involvement in initiatives but feels that there is often too much bureaucracy which hinders progress. ACVT understands that one of the key functions of LSPs is to create synergy between services, but the AVCT believes that different LSP members can have their own specific agendas which make effective synergies difficult.

There is a strong feeling that politicians need to better understand the social sector in more detail – ACVT feels that there is a lack of targeted and focused investment into community anchors, and government will only invest in anchors when they apply for funding streams and grants, and are subsequently successful.

5.5.5 Challenges for the future

The key challenge outlined is for the partnership to maintain its developments. It has been growing significantly over the last seven to eight years and needs to continue to remain dynamic in order to keep thriving and meet the needs of the local community, successfully building its growing commercial profile in continuing to win and deliver public contracts for skills and employment provision.

Although the ACVT and the partnership would like to see more core funding made available (and they are concerned about the constant changes within government structure and policy endangering this), their considerable development is primarily down to commercial success, and it is mainly through this avenue that they envisage future growth.

6 CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY ANCHOR ORGANISATIONS

This research to date has portrayed an extremely positive picture of the role of and the benefits of community anchor organisations in local communities, as service deliverers, as economic contributors and in democratic and cohesive renewal. The core reason for undertaking this research was to demonstrate this role. However of equal importance was to highlight some of the sticking points and challenges for community anchor organisations in actually carrying out their activities and delivering against their objectives. Despite the policy rhetoric described earlier and the discussion around strategic relations detailed in the case studies running a community anchor organisations is not an easy task.

Whilst, and as is the case with many third sector organisations, the primary challenge is access to sustainable and long term funding there are a host of other challenges which community anchor organisations face. These have been identified in both the literature and case study elements of this research.

6.1 Challenge 1: Sustainable funding

As suggested at the outset of this research, the Government rhetoric around support for the third sector is positive. The Office of the Third Sector together with special grant initiatives around Capacity and Community Builders, for example, are useful additions to the policy terrain. Yet there are problems with this strategic and funding regime for two core reasons, which is largely reflective of the shift from grants to contracts.

First, not all third sector and community anchor organisations are the same: they are different in their size and scale; they are different in the types of activities they deliver; they are different in their capacity to bid for and deliver services and apply for grants; and they are different in terms of the geography they deliver at.

Second, the Government's special initiatives and vocal support is contradictory to cuts it is making to public spending as a result of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review³⁵ and the drive for efficiency as advocated through Gershon and further emphasised in the 2009 Budget³⁶. This is contradictory because some of the first areas local government will look to make efficiency savings and spending cuts is in the level of services delivered and in terms of core grants for voluntary and community sector organisations and community centres. Whilst cuts in services can provide opportunities for third sector organisations in terms of plugging gaps for local communities, cuts in core grant can threaten the viability of community anchor organisations.

The example of SPARTH Community Centre is a common one in the third sector. The Centre has utilised core grants from Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for many years to fund the upkeep, maintenance and running of the Centre. While the SPARTH Community Centre continue to prove their worth to the Council, there is more than likely to become a point, given public spending restraints and the efficiency drive, where the local authority begin to re-consider core grants. This is where the agendas of commissioning and procurement become important for third sector and community anchor organisations.

Increasingly, local authorities are seeking to commission target focused and specific delivery activities through the Local Area Agreement and service delivery activities through public procurement. This represents a core challenge for community anchor organisations on two fronts. First, in order for community anchor organisations to be commissioned to deliver Local Area Agreement activities, they need to be strongly recognised by the local authority as boundary wide deliverers. Given, the neighbourhood focused nature of many community anchor organisations, local authority wide delivery requires more capacity. Second, procurement is a very competitive and challenging agenda. Community anchor organisations will effectively be bidding for service delivery contracts against other organisations in the public, private and third sectors. This bidding process requires time, knowledge and capacity.

³⁵ HM Treasury (2007) *Meeting the aspirations of the British people. 2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review.* http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_complete-report_1546.pdf

³⁶ HM Treasury (2009) *Budget 2009: Building Britain's Future.* http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/Budget2009/bud09_complete-report_2520.pdf

A key challenge for community anchor organisations is therefore ensuring the sustainability of funding that both supports the existing neighbourhood focused activities of the organisation and its community focused ethos and which enables it to branch out into wider service delivery.

6.2 Challenge 2: Local authority commissioning and procurement practices

Over the last 12 years, the concept of devolution has shaped the policies of the Government. Within this concept of devolution to the regional and local government tiers, there has been a reflection upon further devolving powers and delivery activities towards third sector organisations and communities themselves. The Government's most recent consultation document 'Strengthening Local Democracy'³⁷ has this process of devolution and community empowerment at its heart.

The strengthening local democracy consultation is framed within the context of a number of recent central government interventions designed to devolve power toward the local. The partnership and performance focused Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements have laid the foundations for a greater degree of trust between the central and local level over strategic policy and delivery decision making. This has been further emphasised in the local economic development focused proposals of the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration³⁸ which are currently passing through Parliament as the Local Empowerment, Economic Development and Construction Bill³⁹. Add to this the often forgotten Power to Promote Well-being from the Local Government Act 2000⁴⁰ and the opportunities presented to local government to shape local physical, economic, social and environmental change through the Sustainable Communities Act 2007⁴¹, then it becomes clearer that this devolution rhetoric is potentially filtering through into reality.

Central to all of the policy agendas described above is the transfer of powers and delivery activities further through the processes of commissioning and procurement. As described in challenge 1, as special and grant funding subsides commissioning and procuring services will become increasingly important for community anchor organisations. This agenda of commissioning and procurement does itself present a range of challenges and issues for community anchor organisations. These include:

- ❑ a poor understanding of what constitutes the third sector;
- ❑ a poor recognition by public and private procurers of the role and value of community anchor organisations;
- ❑ a lack of collaboration between third sector and community anchor organisations for procurement opportunities;
- ❑ a lack of understanding on the part of public sector procurers as to how 'third sector' organisations vary;
- ❑ an overuse of jargon in the procurement agenda;
- ❑ a lack of procurement and tender readiness amongst community anchors organisations.

The challenge of procuring delivery activities to community anchor organisations is not just a challenge for community anchor organisations themselves but also for procurement departments in local authorities and other public and private bodies. There are a number of further challenges for procurement bodies in identifying and utilising community anchor organisations for service delivery. These include:

- ❑ procurement law from the European Union restricts the use of local suppliers and third sector organisations;

³⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) *Strengthening Local Democracy*.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1290537.pdf>

³⁸ Communities and Local Government (2007) *Prosperous Places: taking forward the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration*. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/citiesandregions/snr>

³⁹ HM Government (2009) Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/localdemocracyeconomicdevelopmentandconstruction.html>

⁴⁰ HM Government (2000) Local Government Act 2000. http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1

⁴¹ HM Government (2007) Sustainable Communities Act 2007. http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

- ❑ there is a perception that some third sector organisations don't have the capacity to put together tender documents;
- ❑ a lack of knowledge over what types of activities third sector organisations deliver in a place;
- ❑ many organisations in the third sector are too small to deliver the size of contracts which are available through the procurement process.

If community anchor organisations, and the third sector more generally, are to more effectively take advantage of the shift from grants to contracts, and the focus upon commissioning and procurement there needs to be further support and training for these organisations to actually bid to deliver services. This needs to be facilitated alongside greater knowledge making activities in the public and private sectors, as to what third sector organisations are actually capable of delivering and a degree of flexibility in the procurement process to ensure community benefit can be enabled. A challenge for community anchor organisations is therefore identifying which service areas they can feasibly deliver services in and also being skilled enough to overcome the bureaucracy and complexity which surrounds commissioning and procurement.

Alt Valley Community Trust is particularly close to the commissioning and procurement agendas recognising both the value of delivering services on behalf of the public sector and the associated challenges which come with this added provision. The legislative culture and bureaucracy of procurement is a key challenge for Alt Valley Community Trust. They feel that over the last few years they have undertaken a number of development activities that have both utilised and upskilled local labour. The public sector it believes should be looking to follow suit through procurement activities particularly around construction.

6.3 Challenge 3: The quick goodbye to area based initiatives

Since the early 1980s and the Urban Programme, successive governments have implemented a range of initiatives designed to regenerate and improve some of the most deprived areas and neighbourhoods in the country. These 'area-based' initiatives have included: City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Whilst these initiatives were very area based and holistic in their approaches, more contemporary funding streams have moved toward being more thematic such as the Working Neighbourhood Funds emphasis upon worklessness.

This move from areaism and holism towards thematism presents a challenge for the third sector and community anchor organisations. Whilst, community anchor organisations were often effective in the past in accessing funds through Neighbourhood Renewal Fund as a result of the variety of activities they delivered, a more thematic approach has significantly reduced the amount of monies available to the sector through area based initiatives. In fact it can be argued that whilst regeneration monies are still made on the basis of deprivation utilising the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, that area based initiatives have effectively come to a close for the time being.

Again, the challenge here for community anchor organisations is funding. They will increasingly need to diversify income streams to ensure that the diversity of their delivery activities is both recognised and fundable. Funding through streams such as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund have been key contributory factors to the ongoing development and sustainability of organisations such as Four Estates Ltd. The organisation feels that if they are to be able to continue to offer tailored and bespoke neighbourhood services to the local community, then this funding shortfall from area based sources needs to be matched with further core funding for the third sector from Government.

6.4 Challenge 4: The growth of the supra-charity

One of the key problems with the third sector is its definition. The sector ranges from small, very neighbourhood focused community groups to large national charities such as Age Concern. Throw in terms such as social enterprise and community anchor organisation and it becomes very difficult for commissioners, procurers, and indeed communities to understand what the sector constitutes. Community anchor organisations therefore need to be very clear in demonstrating their objectives, range of activities and geographical remit.

The growth of the supra-charity, a phrase used to describe large multinational charities has not helped access to funding at the local level for much smaller single community focused organisations.

Indeed 80% of the growth in the third sector in recent years has been amongst these supra-charities.

Again, this is both a challenge and an opportunity for community anchor organisations. A challenge in that, it is competition for funding. An opportunity in that, it can enable partnership between supra-charities and community anchor organisations when it comes to neighbourhood level activity.

6.5 Challenge 5: Maintaining strategic relations with local government and other partners

The case study of SPARTH Community Centre demonstrated the real value of strong strategic and partnership arrangements between community anchor organisations, local government and other partners. As demonstrated in the case study, this partnership focused approach has enabled respect to be built up of the organisation amongst the local authority and has also enabled them to keep up to date with local authority agendas and of potential delivery opportunities.

Partnership working both within the third sector through the CVS and other third sector infrastructure bodies and with the public and private sectors through Local Strategic Partnerships has taken on added significance in recent years. No longer is the local authority the only deliverer in a place. They are instead an enabler and facilitator of shape placing. The Local Government White Paper from 2006⁴², the subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007)⁴³ and the Empowerment White Paper from 2008⁴⁴ are all grounded in the notion that local government are leaders of local coalitions of deliverers and partners. The third sector are thus crucial to the functioning of place and joined up local governance.

The challenge of partnership with the public sector is an important one for community anchor organisations. For organisations with existing relationships with the public sector, a key challenge is ensuring those relationships are sustainable in the long term. For organisations with no existing partnership relationships, the challenge is getting their foot on the ladder. For them to get onto that first rung of the ladder, community anchor organisations need to offer positive reasons for being at the partnership table and be fit for purpose.

6.6 Challenge 6: Long term maintenance and sustainability of assets

For each of the case study organisations spoken to as part of this research, a key challenge is having the required funding and capital to maintain the upkeep of their assets, which are mostly in the form of community centres and green space. This is not only in terms of external and internal maintenance in the form of roofing and decoration, but also in terms of maintenance requirements which are emerging as a result of demographic and legislative changes. As the UK population gets older and through legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (2005)⁴⁵ there is an active need to ensure that community anchor facilities and community centres are accessible and open to all.

Whilst each of the case study organisations effectively owned their assets or had been successful in transferring assets from the local authority, the challenge of securing funding to gain and maintain assets is even more prevalent for organisations that do not currently own an asset. The very concept of community anchor organisations is that they require a base from which to operate and which the community can access. The outcomes of the Quirk Review present this opportunity. There is however a challenge for emerging community anchor organisations in demonstrating their viability to local authorities for the transfer of assets. Despite Quirk, the process of transferring assets to the community remains complex and bureaucratic, representing a significant challenge for community anchor organisations and what they are trying to achieve.

⁴² Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and prosperous communities: The Local Government White Paper*. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/152456.pdf>

⁴³ HM Government (2007) *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*. http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1

⁴⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *Communities in control: real people, real power*. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/886045.pdf>

⁴⁵ HM Government (2005) *Disability Discrimination Act 2005*. http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2005/ukpga_20050013_en_1

6.7 Challenge 7: Maintaining a community focus

The move from grants to contracts, the drive towards local authority boundary level service delivery, and the culture of partnership have all become important elements of third sector project activities in recent years. Community anchor organisations, in particular also have a strong social ethos which means the diversity of activities that they provide are often focused upon specific neighbourhoods or target groups. These dual agendas provide somewhat of a paradox for community anchor organisations. On the one hand, there is a drive to comply with partnership and service delivery activities. On the other, there is a commitment to the local community.

There is a key challenge for community anchor organisations in finding the correct balance between retaining the socially focused ethos and also bidding for and chasing service delivery contracts to ensure sustainability.

6.8 Challenge 8: Retaining and developing staff and volunteers

Many community anchor organisations were established as a result of the enthusiasm, commitment and vision of charismatic individuals coming together in an act of collective action. Whilst many community anchor organisations have grown in size, taking on more staff (both paid and voluntary), in some instances the same charismatic individuals remain the driving force of the organisation. It is important that the skills, knowledge and experience of these individuals is actively shared with newer members of staff and volunteers to ensure the longevity of the community anchor organisation, should they have to move on.

Community anchors organisations are diverse in terms of their staff. Some may have significant numbers of paid members of staff, whilst others may rely heavily on volunteers. Both of these scenarios present challenges. For community anchor organisations with paid members of staff, it is important that employees are given adequate support and opportunities for personal development so as to promote staff retention. Many community anchor organisations, however, rely on committed teams of volunteers. There may be a risk that some community anchor organisations become over-reliant on volunteers, making the organisation vulnerable if volunteers move on. Therefore it is important that community anchor organisations continue to value volunteers and provide sufficient support in an effort to encourage retention.

6.9 Challenge 9: Capacity and governance

Another challenge, identified by Lancashire County Council, facing voluntary and community organisations is a lack of capacity within the sector, particularly in terms of governance. While this is not the case with organisations such as the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre featured in this report, other organisations elsewhere can lack a 'management culture' and may also struggle to provide the necessary paperwork that is often required when working in partnership with a local authority.

7 PROMOTING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ANCHOR ORGANISATIONS AND KEY POLICY CHALLENGES

7.1 The contemporary policy challenges

2008 and 2009 has seen a series of issues emerge that will have a thorough and longstanding impact upon many of the communities in the North West region and beyond. These issues include:

7.1.1 The recession

The credit crunch, economic downturn and subsequent recession will have, and is having, significant impacts upon local economies and local communities in the form of rising unemployment, rising business liquidations, increasing social unrest, decreasing housing prices, and increasing need for support. These are major issues that potentially threaten the very functioning and social and physical fabric of place.

7.1.2 The democratic deficit

In a country of strong democratic values and principles, the current levels of trust in central government, local government and financial institutions is exceptionally poor. Whilst the recession has exacerbated levels of mistrust in central government and particularly financial institutions there has been a democratic deficit in the UK for a while. Turnout at the last general election in 2005 was just 42% in the Liverpool Riverside area and 43% in Manchester Central. Even more worrying than these low figures is the fact that there is an extremely strong correlation between voter apathy and areas of high deprivation meaning that those in greatest need of government support are often those furthest removed from the democratic process.

7.1.3 In-cohesion

Related to the point around democratic deficit and despite significant government investment, the issue of community cohesion or in-cohesion remains prevalent in many communities. Relationships and levels of trust between communities, ethnicities and ages can be poor and incoherent. Issues of community in-cohesion have been further tempered by the re-emergence of the far right and particularly the British National Party (BNP).

7.1.4 A dissatisfaction with place, people and services

The results of the 2008 Place Survey have detailed the levels of dissatisfaction that people have with the place they live in, with their fellow communities and with the services they receive from their local council. Some of the headline figures of the survey are as follows:

- ☐ 29% of respondents felt they could influence decisions in their local area;
- ☐ 33% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their local council provided value for money;
- ☐ 31% of respondents felt that people in their local area treated one another with respect and dignity.

The data presented above are just three of the indicators utilised in the place survey. The remainder of the results demonstrate poor community perceptions of civic participation, of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood, and levels of satisfaction with local services.

7.2 The government response

The Government have responded to the challenges described above with an array of policies, programmes and initiatives designed to enable democratic renewal, stimulate local economic development and ensure community cohesion. These interventions have been largely top-down in their approach and have included policy developments such as Local Area Agreements, the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration, the Empowerment White Paper, and the Strengthening Local Democracy consultation paper. These interventions whilst welcome have also come in a period of cost-cutting and efficiency savings in the public sector and funding cuts in area based initiatives focused upon regeneration, local economic development and civic renewal.

These top-down approaches, whilst often providing funding for the third sector for delivery activities; enabling a seat at the partnership table; and presenting the opportunity for capacity building have not always reflected or recognised the value of bottom up approaches nor the ability of third sector organisations to tackle the four key contemporary issues identified above.

7.3 Ten ways in which community anchor organisations can deliver

Through the review of literature and case study research with the SPARTH Community Centre; the Ulverston Ford Park Group; the Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre; Four Estates Ltd; and the Alt Valley Community Trust, this research has demonstrated the significant roles and values community anchor organisations provide to communities and to the processes of democratic renewal and local economic development. The research has also provided something of a selling and advocacy document which community anchor organisations can utilise to overcome some of the challenges they face, primarily in relation to sustainable funding but also with regard to strategic relations, asset transfer and procurement and commissioning. As such there are ten key linkages which community anchor organisations should be utilising to demonstrate their value in wider local policy, decision making and funding opportunities:

7.3.1 Local economic development

- ❑ community anchor organisations can provide a range of activities which stimulate local monetary and social economies;
- ❑ community anchor organisations through volunteering opportunities can stimulate active citizenship and civic participation;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can deliver services on behalf of local government and other public service providers which both meet a local need and which offer value for money.

7.3.2 Local democratic renewal

- ❑ community anchor organisations can provide a forum and venue for neighbourhood focused discussions;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can support the activities and sustainability of other local voluntary and community groups;
- ❑ community anchor organisations can be involved strategically in decision making with the wider third sector and through the Local Strategic Partnership.

7.3.3 Community cohesion

- ❑ community anchor organisations can bring together diverse groups and those most marginalised in society;
- ❑ community organisations can provide both long and short term support across a range of themes for the most needy members of the community;
- ❑ community anchor organisations provide a base for the local community to engage with if they wish. This physical presence is often the key value of a community anchor organisation.

7.3.4 Place satisfaction

- ❑ community anchor organisations can improve the look, physical and green environment of a place thus contributing to increased satisfaction with neighbourhoods.

APPENDIX 1

Contemporary third sector policy

Table 1: Contemporary third sector policy

Policy document	Key themes
HM Treasury (1998) 'Compact: Getting it right together'	The Compact provided a framework for effective engagement between the Government and the third sector.
HM Treasury (2002) 'The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery'	The review made a number of recommendations as to how to reform the VCS, including: to involve the VCS in the planning as well as the delivery of services; to forge long term strategic partnerships with the sector; to build the capacity of the sector; to implement the Compact at all levels.
Home Office (2004) 'Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building'	Reports on the findings from a Government review of support for community development and capacity building. Advocates a fuller involvement of citizens and communities.
Cabinet Office (2006) 'Scaling enterprise action plan: Scaling new heights'	The action plan aimed to open the door to more social enterprises, raise awareness of what they can achieve and encourage more people to make a difference, either by involvement or investment.
DCLG (2006) 'Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper'	The aim of this White Paper was to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives, this included working in partnership with the third sector. The White Paper proposed working to empower and raise the capacity of the sector and also advocated greater involvement of third sector organisations in delivering public services.
Cabinet Office (2007) 'Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets'	Set out the benefits of local groups owning or managing community assets such as village halls, community centres, and community enterprises.
HM Treasury (2007) 'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report'	The Government's final report of its review of the third sector sets out a strategy to work with third sector organisations over the next ten years to promote social and economic regeneration.
CLG (2007) 'Third sector strategy for Communities and Local Government'	Sets out CLG's vision for how it aims to improve its engagement with the third sector.
CLG (2008) 'Communities in control: Real people, real power'	Set out the Government's vision for passing more power to communities, including the idea of a new Asset Transfer Unit.

APPENDIX 2

Case Study Proforma

PROFORMA FOR INTERVIEWS WITH CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) has been commissioned by North West Together We Can to undertake research which demonstrates the value of community anchor organisations to local communities, local economies and local service delivery.

CLES is an independent and charitable think-doing organisation based in Manchester. We undertake a range of research activities around regeneration, local economic development and regeneration. We are committed to community development and social justice.

As part of the research we are speaking to five case study community anchor organisations to seek to find out:

- ☐ what the organisation does and its service offer;
- ☐ the role it plays in the local community;
- ☐ the links it has to the local authority and other partners;
- ☐ the value it adds to local people and place.

Community anchor organisations have been formally defined by the Community Alliance as:

'Community anchors are independent community-led organisations. They are multi-purpose and provide holistic solutions to local problems and challenges, bringing out the best in people and agencies. They are there for the long term, not just the quick fix. Community anchors are often the driving force in community renewal'

They have a number of roles including as: service providers; community financiers; community advocates; community infrastructure supporters; and community empowerers.

Questions

About the organisation

- 1) Please can you tell me a little bit about your organisation (history, mission, assets)?
- 2) What types of services and activities do you deliver here?
- 3) Where does your funding come from?
- 4) Do you view your organisation as a community anchor?

Roles and benefits of Community Anchor Organisations

- 5) Are your services and activities targeted at specific groups?
- 6) What do you view as the role of your organisation in the local community?
- 7) What do you view as the key benefits of the services and activities you provide?
- 8) Does your organisation support other community groups? What type?

Strategic relations

- 9) Is your organisation valued by the local authority?
- 10) does your organisation relate to the LSP/LAA and do you contribute toward targets?
- 11) What more can local government and central government do to support community anchors?

Future challenges

- 12) What are the key future challenges for your organisation?

Further materials

- 13) Can you provide us with any further materials about your organisation? Promotional stuff, evaluations etc.

APPENDIX 3

List of consultees

LIST OF CONSULTEES

- ❑ Kenny Farrar: Centre Manager, SPARTH Community Centre, Rochdale
- ❑ Jackie Williams: Manager, Ulverston Ford Park Community Group, Ulverston
- ❑ Abhinandana: Centre Manager, Gujarat Hindu Society and Centre, Preston
- ❑ Phil Knibb: Chief Executive, Alt Valley Community Trust, Liverpool
- ❑ Shelagh Kearney: Community Development Manager, Four Estates Ltd
- ❑ Councillor Angela Coric: Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- ❑ Phil Burton: Principle Community Affairs Officer, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- ❑ Ishwer Tailor: Business Inclusion Manager, Lancashire County Developments Ltd
- ❑ Nick Mannion, Director of Neighbourhood Management, Halton Strategic Partnership
- ❑ Dot Stone, Business Support Officer, Alt Valley Neighbourhood Services⁴⁶
- ❑ Lorraine Smyth, Community Programmes and Performance Manager, Cumbria County Council

⁴⁶ CLES has sought to speak to the Neighbourhood Management Team at Alt Valley on several occasions. They will be providing further strategic opinion about Alt Valley Community Trust at a later date.