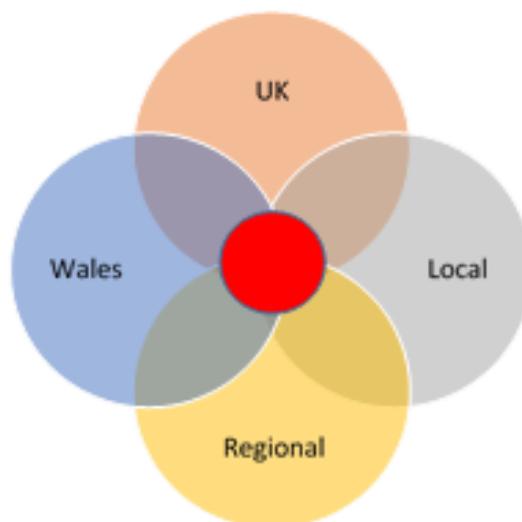




Trust and Partnership

As we look ahead to local government reform, what lessons could be learned from Wales's only URBAN I Community Initiative?



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The thoughts contained in this paper in no way reflect the position of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David or of the City and County of Swansea. They represent my individual perspective and are offered to help anyone who might be interested in looking back to learn lessons as we plan to meet the demands of the future

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Executive Summary

This is the first of a two-part examination of the very-local, grassroots or community-level aspect of public service delivery in Wales. This paper is written, in part, as a contribution to the Green Paper 'Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People'. It looks back at the experience of community regeneration gained over the last 20 years in the Townhill ward (Townhill, Mayhill and Gors localities, collectively known as 'the Hill') in Swansea. The second paper, 'Time to Be Radical!' considers some of the options on the table at a time when 'the need for radical change is urgent and pressing.'¹

A summary is easy: under the right conditions the very-local level of service delivery has enormous potential to improve services and reduce pressures on public budgets, especially in the most challenged parts of Wales. We have the potential to create fully self-sustaining, locally owned and managed, community-facing organisations, wherever the statistics suggest we might consider this option or wherever one might be desired. 'Trust and Partnership' aims to outline the nature of the only European Union (EU) URBAN I Community Initiative in Wales and the thinking behind the creation of the Hill Community Development Trust Ltd (HCDDT). There will be consideration of 'community anchors,' 'community hubs' and 'Communities First', before summing up and pointing towards the second paper.

HCDDT was created to build on the foundation laid by the URBAN initiative which ran between 1994 and 2001. URBAN laid a foundation which inspired grassroots community development and regeneration across Swansea and much further afield. URBAN itself was able to build on a foundation set by the pioneering work of the Community Centre Management Committees and the Tenants and Residents' Association on the Hill which were formed in the 1980s.² It is interesting to note that the building now used as the Townhill/Mayhill District Housing Office and community centre, was opened in May 1939 as a mini civic centre. The desire then was to take local government closer to the people, and that was a driving force behind URBAN

¹ Welsh Government (2018) Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People – Green Paper consultation document, issued 20th March 2018.

² Townhill/Mayhill URBAN Initiative (1997) URBAN Action Plan 1997-1999, URBAN Management Committee March 1997; page 12

and the creation of the development trust to service that community in 2001. It is also a key consideration in the current climate.

The cynics thought that the ambitions for Townhill were always doomed to fail, but they were wrong. Some felt that the URBAN programme would not succeed but it did. The idea of setting up a community company to deliver services and generate an independent income stream was often ridiculed – how could we create a community business at Paradise Park in the heart of the Townhill estate? Since then we have seen the generation of approximately £5m, half of which has come from trading activities through the Phoenix Centre, with the other half from government grants, all of which has been reinvested in the life of the company and the community.

Pioneers

Arnold Phillips and the late Townhill Councillor Tyssul Lewis were the dynamic duo who got the URBAN ball rolling in the first place, but there was an army of elected members and officers around them who made things work. The media cameras pointed at Arnold and 'Tyss' but they were the tip of the iceberg. Would things have progressed without Eluned Morgan MEP and Alan Williams MP arguing our case in Brussels and the House of Commons? Would we have received so much support without Andrew Davies AM as our representative in the new Welsh Assembly? Early ambitions would have been dead in the water without councillors, including people who grew up on the Hill and long-standing colleagues, voting to go ahead. More importantly, when URBAN ended, and responsibility was transferred to the development trust in January 2002, could progress have been made without so many local people engaged with the process of change, without public service colleagues keen to do things differently, without those with the commercial skills, experience and insight which we desperately needed to maximise opportunities? I still get a bit emotional when people talk about the 'Phoenix Family': it was a true effort of dynamic collaboration which made the magic happen. The magic is still happening. In 2018, we have the opportunity for step-change based on a strong foundation of practical experience over two decades.

1 Introduction

1.1 Old Swansea

In his excellent book Nigel Robins³ shines an important light into early twentieth century housing in Swansea. We see the backdrop of Victorian slum dwellings and real human misery, and we see community leadership from two local councillors – Ruthen and Solomon. When they attended a housing reform conference in 1906, they couldn't have imagined the dramatic improvements in housing for ordinary working-class people which would follow. The South Wales Cottage Exhibition in Mayhill four years later brought together politicians and professionals from all over the country. Their discussions concentrated on the idea that well-designed cottages of varying sizes could be built with government subsidy and let to ordinary people at an affordable level of rent. These proposals must have seemed like science fiction for people who were used to living in conditions unimaginable by today's standards.

1.2 Councillors and quality housing

After the First World War there was energy and drive to build houses for the returning heroes. Jobs in the building industry were welcome and the slow process of rebuilding families and creating new communities begun. This is what shaped villages, towns and cities in the inter-war years. Opportunities created by a national framework were picked up by local politicians who saw the potential to transform the lives of so many ordinary people. My mother remembered vividly the experience she, her siblings and parents had when they first visited their new Council home at 60 Oak Street, Rhydfelin in Pontypridd in 1946. Having lived with 13 family members in a two-bedroomed terrace house, they were blown away by this palace on the new housing estate: large gardens front and back, central heating, a gas cooker, three spacious bedrooms, an indoor bathroom upstairs and an additional toilet downstairs. My old friend and former councillor, the late Gordon Carruthers, had a similar experience some years before when he moved from Victorian slum housing at Wellington Street, Swansea, to his new family home at Berw Road, Mayhill. Many thousands of ordinary, working people have the same experience reflected in the collective memory of their own families.

³ Robins N (2003) Homes for Heroes: early twentieth century housing in the County Borough of Swansea, Studies in Swansea's History, Swansea: C&C Swansea, available at <http://www.swanseashop.co.uk/shop/homes-for-heroes/>

2 The URBAN Community Initiative

By the time we came to the early 1990s, the huge Townhill estate consisting of 3,800 houses and 13,450 people had developed a negative reputation with all of the statistical evidence of multiple-deprivation evident. Swansea and 'the Hill', had the unfortunate reputation as the car crime capital of Europe. As a youth worker in the Mayhill Boys' Club⁴ there was never a dull moment: there was violence, drink and drug abuse and high levels of car crime amongst the young people, but there was also a lively, bright-eyed intelligence. Some died tragically young. Others went on to become successful members of society.

2.1 What was the URBAN initiative?

The Council was successful in its application to be part of the URBAN Community Initiative. This pilot European structural programme aimed to take a bottom-up approach to tackling very long standing social and economic issues in the most deprived communities. URBAN was delivered in two phases with Townhill the chosen community for phase one and West Wrexham for phase two⁵.



The URBAN programme for Townhill was approved by the European Commission on the 6th of November 1996, and it covered quite a large geographical area: the entire Townhill estate, extending into the Castle ward - down to Carmarthen Road all the way to Dyfatty lights, and down towards Fforestfach Cross in the Cockett ward. The net was cast as wide as possible to engage the full range of public, private and voluntary agency partners. All of these key partners would strive to fully engage with local residents in the design and delivery of projects which aimed to make a tangible difference. These projects would be brought together in the first URBAN Action Plan

⁴ This is a historically significant facility which has been closed for many years. Initially built in the 1920s to distract youngsters from the Greenhill part of Swansea away from a life of crime, the Boys' Club was funded directly by police officers through subscriptions taken from their wages. The club had many successes, not least the Hopkins brothers who competed at the 1948 London Olympics in gymnastics.

⁵ Altogether 165 cities participated in URBAN I and URBAN II across Europe, with the first running between 1994 and 1999 (including Townhill) and the second between 2000 and 2006 (including West Wrexham)

(UAP) 1997-1999, to be followed by the second UAP in 1998. The overriding aim was the economic regeneration of the entire area.

2.2 URBAN Measures

The URBAN programme aimed to take a holistic approach to the regeneration of a community beset by very high unemployment, high crime, poor educational attainment, and a terribly negative reputation as an unfriendly and hostile place.

Local problems were characterised by⁶:

- a high benefit dependency culture
- low self-esteem and a lack of community spirit
- low levels of health and health awareness
- community facilities and services which were in some cases outdated or inappropriate
- high levels of crime and vandalism and the fear of crime

Four key measures shaped the design and delivery of projects supported by an investment of £6.3m, £2.73m of which came through Council match funding:

<p>Measure 1 Community Revitalisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve health • Reduce crime levels • Improve facilities and services • Increase sense of community • Reduce poverty 	<p>Measure 2 Vocational Education and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase and sustain participation in vocational education and training • Increase take-up of training provisions • Co-ordinate the approach to family education initiatives • Develop and implement modular vocational education and training programmes • Promote community education • Promote child care and parental support linked to education, training and work
<p>Measure 3 Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve employment prospects for Townhill residents • Promote and support local entrepreneurial initiatives • Promote and support community businesses • Promote investment in job creation 	<p>Measure 4 Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping and other environmental schemes • Open space development and rehabilitation • Community environment projects • Garden re-use schemes • Pathway construction • Traffic-parking, management and calming schemes • Community transport initiatives • Improvement of disabled access • Eye sore and knotweed clearance

⁶ Townhill/Mayhill URBAN Initiative (1997) URBAN Action Plan 1997-1999, URBAN Management Committee March 1997; p15

2.3 URBAN evaluation

After a slow start the URBAN machine got itself into gear and some 28 projects were carried to fruition across all four measures. The European Union (2003)⁷ acknowledged teething difficulties in Swansea where the amount of time to mobilise and build capacity in community and partner agencies was underestimated. The EU also flagged up how proactive the Council was to replicate the success of URBAN by introducing regeneration programmes in 10 other areas of the city based directly on the community partnership approach⁸.

2.4 Strong vision and leadership

In the foreword to the URBAN Programme Report (1994-1999) there were words of support, enthusiasm and commitment from the late Mr Ian Spratling OBE⁹, as the independent Chairperson of the URBAN initiative, Lord Mayor Councillor John Davies, Eluned Morgan MEP and Andrew Davies AM. As a member of the partnership Councillor Davies said,

The URBAN Initiative begins to put into practice a new vision for regeneration with a focus on improving the well-being of individuals, developing businesses and creating jobs. URBAN leads the way in implementing regional and national strategies for sustainable regeneration.

Andrew Davies AM acknowledged URBAN's success in helping local people to participate in the economic regeneration process and was clear on the importance of this continued approach:

Investing in the capacity of community organisations and the health, well-being and motivation of young people and adults is essential if we are to address issues of social exclusion and deprivation in these areas.

In his speech at the opening of the Phoenix Centre by Prime Minister Tony Blair on 3rd March 2001, with First Minister Rhodri Morgan present, Mr Spratling said he was an independent private sector chairperson but proud to be part of a strong team. He described the approach taken as a sound example of how EU funds could be used to improve quality of life and he referred to the superb team effort of the EU, the

⁷ European Union (2003) Ex Post Evaluation of the URBAN Community Initiative 1994-1999; p37 & 53

⁸ EU (2003; p60)

⁹ The opening of the Phoenix Centre is remembered by those who were there as the best of days because it represented the culmination of a gargantuan effort by many people to get the centre up and running. It is also remembered as the worst of days because Mr Spratling died in a tragic accident at home later that day. See BBC (2001) 'Freak fall kills community worker' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/1200643.stm>

Council, many agencies and the local community. Mr Spratling said this approach was a true partnership with the dedicated purpose of bringing back pride into a community, with no debts and the potential for financial sustainability. He saw the Phoenix as the cornerstone and flagship for the Hill communities. Cabinet Member the late Councillor Tyssul Lewis was quoted as saying,

In all my many years as Councillor for this area, I can truly say that ‘the Phoenix’ is the most significant development in the estate’s history¹⁰

Councillor Lewis had an enormously influential role at a critical time. Just like his predecessors Housing Committee Councillors Ruthen and Solomon who saw important opportunities for local development¹¹, albeit on a much grander scale with the creation of a huge new housing estate, he saw the potentials and was not afraid of the challenge of doing things differently. He was supported by fellow councillors and officers who saw the seriousness of local issues and recognised the potentials of an imaginative, albeit risky, new approach. Council Director of Housing and Regeneration, Arnold Phillips¹², was an inspiring and motivational driver of change with a boundless energy for the potentials of the development trust approach for this and other communities.

2.5 Why a development trust?

As part of the URBAN programme, the Community Development Foundation (CDF 1998) was commissioned by the Council, “... to make recommendations about the possible establishment of a Development Trust for Townhill and Mayhill.” This report recommended that the Council “should support the establishment of a development trust ... in order to take the regeneration initiative forward.” Alan Twelvetrees, the author of the report, made some important observations:

- The European Commission emphasized three criteria for the regeneration of disadvantaged areas: a multi-agency partnership; strong community involvement; a ‘forward’ strategy for long term sustainability
- Such initiatives shouldn’t overburden local authorities financially
- Without community engagement such approaches are not effective and sustainable in the longer term

¹⁰ Phoenix Community Development Trust (2001) View from the Hill community newsletter, April 2001

¹¹ “Swansea was in the vanguard in planning and design ... a framework of the highest pedigree in which to work” (Robins 2003: 11)

¹² Arnold Phillips was nominated as the Best Local Authority Officer for the UK EU URBAN Network in 2001

- Funds need to be drawn from a variety of sources, including trading, to lessen the dependency on public funding

CDF also addressed staffing considerations with a particular emphasis on the need for an 'exceptionally able' Executive Director for the URBAN programme and also in due course for the newly formed development trust: "Our view is that the Executive Director who is engaged for URBAN, should also be the Executive Director designate of the Trust ..."13

3 The Phoenix, Townhill

The Phoenix Community Development Trust Ltd (PCDT, later renamed HCDT) was incorporated in 2001 as a company limited by guarantee with charitable aims. The Trust had a detailed constitution in the form of a memorandum and articles of association. There was clear stipulation about the number of voluntary directors who could sit on the board to be selected from three categories: local residents, special directors with the skills needed to take the organisation forward and representatives from the key partner agencies. Five objectives would shape the activities of the company as we planned for the future, and these echoed the priority areas initially set by the URBAN measures:

1. To relieve the effects of poverty and promote regeneration
2. To advance education particularly among the unemployed
3. To promote and provide training in skills of all kinds to assist residents in obtaining paid employment
4. To promote and provide training in skills to help people live a healthy lifestyle, and
5. To promote, establish and operate other charitable schemes to benefit the community



3.1 Facilities

The Phoenix Community Enterprise Centre ('The Phoenix') was created to build on the foundation of the URBAN programme and to work towards financial sustainability

¹³ It is important for lead officers to have the right combination of qualifications, knowledge and skills. Excellent communication skills and a genuine interest in people is fundamental.

when the grants ran out. This would be achieved by utilising the space at the centre to provide services by and for the local community: business units to be let at a reasonable rent, a community café, a fully registered children's nursery, a floodlit all-weather sports pitch, Townhill library, a playground and a flexible conference space. The units were let out far quicker than anyone thought possible, and the target of 12,000 users of the library was exceeded by over 20,000 visitors in the first year. This was the first model to be followed later by sister projects Forge Fach in Clydach and the Gorseinon Centre of the Gorseinon Development Trust.

3.2 Income generation

The Trust was never intended to be a cut and thrust, for-profit business. Rather, it was created to maintain a strong focus on improving the quality of life for local residents in a sustainable manner. This model was intended to work hand-in-glove with local and national community regeneration initiatives, with a steady eye on the desire to reduce dependency on government grants.

From a standing start in 2001, levels of self-generated or trading income, as opposed to monies received through government grants, grew steadily, hitting the £100k mark in 2007, rising to £187k in 2008, £248k in 2009 and £265k in 2010. This was a period when the independent proprietors of the children's nursery and community café decided to move onto new opportunities, so the company ran these services directly. Turnover increased and the management challenges grew exponentially. Remembering the old business mantra, 'Turnover is vanity, profitability is sanity', our focus was always on driving up income and controlling costs.

3.3 Chairman and CEO

In July 2002, I was delighted with my appointment as HCDT's Chief Executive Officer. It is an under-statement to say my learning curve was steep! Even though I had by this point worked as a Council officer and manager for some years and spent time as team leader of the Welsh Government's Children First programme (transforming children's social services in Wales), my professional and academic experience hadn't prepared me for the complexity of running a social enterprise. In a large bureaucracy one has access to a wide range of professional colleagues who are on hand to provide advice and guidance on matters relating to the law, finance and accountancy, health and safety, advertising and marketing, web design,

communications, policies and procedures and so on. In this role I found myself walking a tightrope without the safety net of professional support.

At the board meeting of 26th September 2003 where Mr Roy Phelps was confirmed as our new Chairperson he explained that it was a real honour to have been offered this voluntary position. As a friend of Mr Spratling he had a good awareness of our background and success. He said,

I will try to bring additional/new skills to the board and will look forward to working with the board in moving the business forward alongside its plans to achieve our goals. I will ask that in everything we do that we at all times project integrity whilst always remaining open and honest with each other¹⁴

Roy's role was pivotal at a crucial time for the new company. He was instrumental in auditing the position of the trust at that time, opening discussions with key partners and setting direction towards a solvent and sustainable future. A scoping exercise called 'Moving Forward' ensured that every aspect of the Trust's operation was looked at in microscopic detail. He strengthened the board with colleagues who had the necessary skills, knowledge and experience we needed to make progress. He developed a support network which I could call on as required. His connections enabled me to embark on an MBA programme of study, which in time helped me to devise lean and efficient management systems. From day one Roy was crystal clear about a number of critical success factors which remained unchanged in the 11 years we worked very closely together:

- There is a line which separates the role of Chairperson and CEO which should never be crossed. The Chair oversees the board and deals with the higher level strategic matters and line manages the CEO. The CEO has complete responsibility for day-to-day operational matters
- The highest levels of public governance must always be adhered to
- The principle of 'no surprises' must always be respected
- If the community does not want it, then the Trust should not be doing it.

¹⁴ Phoenix Community Development Trust Ltd (PCDT) (2003) Minutes of Board Meeting 26.9.03.

4 Anchors and hubs

4.1 The role of community anchors¹⁵

HCDT is a community anchor organisation. Community anchors are very local, grassroots organisations with their own legal structure, often companies limited by guarantee. These organisations are multi-purpose and seek to support a wide range of activities in partnership with an equally wide range of partners. The drive is to tackle those knotty and long-standing issues which often blight the lives of communities. No issues are too big, too awkward or too complicated not to be tackled where we have imagination, drive and flexibility, shared by a range of sleeves-up collaborators.



Community anchors provide a range of services required by communities like those provided through the Phoenix (sports, children's nurseries, community cafes, libraries, playgrounds); accessibility is improved and the right conditions to learn and earn are created. Resources are funnelled into communities by generating funding directly and applying for funding to cover the costs of specific projects and activities with the support of key partners. Community anchors act as community champions with a strong voice to fight for and protect local causes. Helping local people to organise themselves is a key aspect of this role. Community groups can concentrate their hearts and minds on those issues they want to explore, and to fight for the change they want to see whatever that might be. Crucially, this aspect of community anchors is about sharing not controlling. It is about encouraging local democracy and spreading a sense of personal and collective responsibility. It is about increasing the numbers of people who are actively engaged with the life of their community.

4.2 The role of community hubs

The Phoenix is a community hub. Community hubs are the physical buildings through which services and activities are delivered at the grassroots level. These multi-purpose facilities design and deliver services by and for local communities,

¹⁵ Locality holds a vast amount of information online in this context
<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-hubs/>

often through or with the support and assistance of community anchor organisations. Importantly, community hubs are not created simply by removing a sign which reads 'community centre' and putting up a new sign which reads 'community hub.' Rather, we aim to design a new multi-faceted facility, either as a new build or as a refurbishment project, which combines many services and activities into the single, centrally located and accessible building. This helps to drive up footfall and income generation opportunities, while at the same time reducing the costs of having to support a range of separate buildings providing separate services. We should also consider what we need physical buildings for and the potential for increasing the number of services to be delivered digitally.¹⁶



5 Lessons from Communities First

If the Welsh Government was a stick of Blackpool rock it would have 'citizens to the centre' or some similar variant written all the way through it. From the very first meeting of the new National Assembly for Wales on 12th May 1999, there was importance placed on participative democracy, and on the engagement at a grassroots level of the people of Wales. This extremely important aspect of Welsh public services was encapsulated by the Simpson Report:

It is in local communities where the connection with citizens can be most fully developed, where community leadership can be exercised and where the opportunities for service integration can be best grasped.¹⁷

It is easy to forget the many challenges of the Communities First (CF) programme when it was created in 2001 and began to be cascaded across the country in 2002. New CF Partnerships would be formed to combine the efforts of the public, private and voluntary/community sectors to tackle the most stubborn issues of multiple-deprivation. The Welsh Assembly Government decided not to simply provide the 22

¹⁶ Welsh Government (2015) Why local government must go digital available at <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/localgov/151028-why-local-government-must-go-digital-en.pdf>

¹⁷ Simpson Report (2011:4) Local, Regional, National: What services are best delivered where? Available at <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/829/Local%20regional%20national-%20what%20services%20are%20best%20delivered%20where%202011.pdf>

local authorities with a hypothecated community grant to carry forward the aspirations of the programme.

Communities First was truly ambitious as the initial 2001 guidance explained¹⁸:

- It is a long-term programme which will run for a minimum of ten years
- Communities themselves decide what is needed and are helped to realise their ambitions
- It aspires to increase the level of participation of local people
- It brings in funding and support from a number of different sources
- It is about making a long-lasting difference to our disadvantaged communities
- It encourages creativity, risk taking and imaginative approaches
- It involves an integrated approach to addressing poverty and the factors that cause or contribute to it.

I first became aware of the CF programme when I was a civil servant at the Assembly and I was intrigued by the idea that the ministers wanted to empower communities to take the lead with their own issues. Having worked within Swansea's child and family social services for 5 years, I was a long-time advocate for greater community engagement in the design and delivery of child and family services.

5.1 Themes and action plans

Partnerships would produce Community Action Plans in accordance with a prescribed Vision Framework under clearly defined headings:

Jobs and Business	Education and Training	Environment
Health and Well-being	Active Community	Community Safety

The programme inspired a huge amount of activity across those communities in Wales which the statistics suggested had a higher concentration of multiple-deprivation across a broad range of indicators. In the early days grants were provided for three levels of activity: preparatory activities, capacity building and then the action plan itself. The design and delivery of projects had to be moulded by the key themes of the Vision Framework.

5.2 Community, not Council?

By 2007, it was clear that in many areas Councils were taking control of the programme and the grassroots partnership ethos was being lost. Councils were always going to have a central role, but Assembly officials saw that role as being one

¹⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (2001) Communities First Guidance

of facilitation rather than control. New official guidance reflected this concern with the stipulation that CF staff employed by Councils must be employed to take forward the work of the Partnership and must not be perceived as agents of the local authority¹⁹.

In addition, official guidance also made clear suggestions about the role of Cabinet Members who were engaged with CF Partnerships:

- To inform the Partnership of the local authority's policy priorities and establish the local authority's views on the Partnership's action plan
- To facilitate the Partnership's link with the strategic policy making process of relevant departments and external bodies and ensure that the community strategy process of the local authority takes account of the CF Partnership.²⁰

The same guidance also made suggestions about elected members and the holding of office within Partnerships:

- Given their experience of public life elected members may make suitable candidates for holding posts in the early phase of the Partnership's life
- As CF was all about empowering and enabling, councillors should encourage the powerless and unheard to secure a voice, and one element of that process would be nurturing by councillors
- No elected member should hold office on a CF Partnership 6 years after initial funding was approved
- Any requests for variation would have to be put directly to the Assembly. The Assembly reserved the right to withhold funding on this important point
- Elected members had an important role in nurturing, developing and involving community members
- Elected members should be careful not to use their experience to dominate the Partnership or impose their own agendas.

There were sensitivities here for people on both sides of the local authority coin – councillors and officers. Some councillors felt their extremely important democratic mandate was not being fully acknowledged. Some officers were uncomfortable in working to the collective CF Partnership rather than within familiar hierarchies.

5.3 Legal status

There were also three suggestions on the Legal Status of Communities First Partnerships²¹ without stipulation that any one model was better than any other. Some Partnerships might be unincorporated and have their operations shaped by a

¹⁹ 'The line manager must ensure that the Co-ordinator and other Communities First staff are engaged on taking forward the work of the Partnership and that there is no possibility of their being perceived to be agents of the local authority' Welsh Assembly Government (2007) Communities First Guidance; p36

²⁰ Welsh Assembly Government (2007) Communities First Guidance; p31

²¹ Welsh Assembly Government (2007) Communities First Guidance; section 5

constitution; some 'collaborative' models would be companies limited by guarantee with responsibilities shared between the company and a body which acted as grant recipient (this reflected the position in Townhill as the Council was grant recipient for CF funds), and some might also have additional responsibilities as the direct recipient of grant funding. In all cases the CF Partnership would hold responsibility for developing their action plan collectively with all key partners. The hallmark of the CF approach was to be complete orientation on the needs of the community in question.

5.4 Councillor leadership

The Welsh Local Government Association²² (WLGA) highlights the nature of community leadership for councillors – a role which the Association says is changing significantly. The public sector is under the cosh of continuing austerity and every councillor in the UK knows all too well the pressures which have to be confronted. More of the same is simply not an option as budgets reduce year on year. Local government has to rethink how it delivers services, and we need to engage with local people more than ever before to seek imaginative ways services can be designed and delivered, and to monitor their effectiveness. Moreover, communities have to be helped to support themselves, and the councillor role entails leading the process of engagement and developing the communities we represent. For the WLGA being a community leader means:

- 'Making sure that the views of local people are taken into account when policy and decisions are made. This will include making sure that everyone has a say, not just those that speak loudest. You will also need to speak to the hard to reach or the disinterested
- Making sure that the council is aware of the needs of people in your community. This will require you to know about the needs of everyone in your community not just those who tell you what they want
- Empowering your community to support itself. This may mean organising people to act, share information or develop skills so that they become less dependent on the council
- Working to enable the council and local people to work together to get things done. This is sometimes called co-production and is based upon an equal and reciprocal approach to delivering services
- Encouraging joint working (typically referred to as 'collaboration') between and within communities, and across councils, 'crossing borders' if this is the best way of working

²² Welsh Local Government Association (2017:8) A Guide for New Councillors in Wales, May 2017, available at <http://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=976>

- Raising local concerns and working with others to tackle local issues such as childhood obesity, teenage pregnancy, affordable housing, street scene, and crime and disorder reduction'

Councillors have to work with a level of humility, to hold their hands up and admit that we do not have all the answers. Councillors have to listen and take often opposing perspectives into account. Councillors have to be mindful of engendering a self-help ethos where people are encouraged to support themselves individually and collectively.

6 Summary and a way forward

The Townhill experience has often been looked at as an example of best practice and was described by the United Nations as a world-class example of sustainability.²³ If there are lessons to be gleaned from this paper as we plan for the future they lay in the following areas. These key points will be developed in the second paper with emphasis on meeting the practical challenges.

6.1 Be ambitious and develop a positive attitude to change

Goodwill, trust and mutual respect are critical success factors. Know who your passionate ambassadors for change are and identify the blockers in the system.

6.2 Know what you are looking at

Who lives in conditions most of us might find unimaginable today? We must always be led by evidence which suggests some people face greater challenges than others. In a data-driven age we need to get better at establishing a statistical basis for all work we undertake. Strive to get at the underlying issues beneath the evidence of key performance indicators.

6.3 Design robust measures of success and stick with them

We need to be specific and concentrate efforts on a small number of key performance indicators against which performance is measured. Where we have long-standing, complex issues of poverty and deprivation, the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is a good platform to kick-off from but again it needs sharpening. Once the national and local politicians are clear about what success will look like then we can line all our financial and human resources up to make a

²³ BBC News (2003) 'UN Heaps praise on Centre' http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south_west/3227066.stm

difference: we will all know when we are winning, or not. Without careful measurement, management is impossible.

6.4 Marry strategic vision to very-local community action

A national governance framework establishes a clear and confident line of sight between the vision of the ministers, Public Services Boards and the delivery of services. Clear prescription, rather than general guidance, would clarify essential aspects of national government funded programmes. Ambitious national programmes filtered through locally owned and managed organisations have the greatest chance of hitting some elusive targets. Whatever happens to the reform agenda we must not lose sight of the fact that public services are all about the face-work: the magic happens at the grassroots level. That's where lives are changed.

6.5 Face-work is everything: know and trust your team

The lifeblood of all organisations is the people who work within them. We need to value them as we have never valued them before. These face-workers are the organisation. Nobody sees the Chief Executive or the Chief Constable when they interact with a local authority or the police: they see the face-workers and our collective reputation depends on every single contact made with the members of the public who use our services. Make sure they feel valued and fulfilled in their roles. Trust them to get on with their job and allocate delegated budgets within agreed parameters. Leaders must be highly visible and known personally by the front-line.

6.6 Be led by those who know

Social capital is an untapped resource. Bringing ordinary, everyday people into the process of designing and delivering change is essential: these challenges are theirs, not ours. Politicians, officers, organisations and businesses come and go, but communities endure over time. However, we might categorise the 1,909 statistical areas of Wales (WIMD) as most or least deprived, the voice of those who live in our communities must be sought, listened to, acknowledged, recorded and responded to, especially when they say things we might not want to hear. None of us can get our own way all the time and communities are no different, but there is a dignity and respect in having your voice heard.

6.7 Community budgeting and reinvestment

New initiatives require a boost to get them off the ground: without the £6.3m from the EU, Swansea Council and partners the URBAN ball would not have started rolling. When that initiative ended new government grant funding was secured and ran alongside increasing levels of self-generated income. Establish an asset base which is sufficient to meet community needs at a scale large enough to make a powerful difference. Tie-in assets to a legal structure and ensure all profits are reinvested for community use. Consider how much public money is invested at a community level and think about the return generated on the investment. If the community looks like a black-hole for public money then it is imperative to reduce demand. The debt-free community company on the Hill is more successful than the bankrupt Carillion and all the debt-laden multi-million-pound commercial organisations who fight so fiercely for lucrative public contracts.

6.8 Councillor and community leadership

The WLGA is on the right tracks with its approach to community leadership. Councillors have an extremely important democratic mandate from the people which must sit at the heart of the reform process. Collaboration and coproduction are key ingredients as we look ahead to engage the quietly spoken as well as those who refuse to get off their soap boxes. As we strive to empower others to make the difference we all want to see, to facilitate the process of change rather than to dictate which direction should be taken, we need to be valued and supported in our evolving role and part of this entails realising the limits of our positions. We must work smarter, not harder. We cannot do it all and neither can any single agency.

With 22 Councils in Wales and over 700 Community Councils we cannot avoid asking in a country of 3 million people whether we have too many people sitting around too many tables. What about the size of the wider Welsh public service and the plethora of voluntary and community organisations all competing for limited funds? Are we diluting the power too much and losing its potency?

In future, under the auspices of the Public Services Boards, we have opportunities to realign the public, private and voluntary/ community sectors and tap-in to the resilience of communities.

Mike Durke - June 2018