

Distington Big Local Review – November 2016 (Reviewing the past year since our previous review in November 2015)

1. What has your Big Local area done against what was in your plan.

- Village Maintenance project has been developed & is going very well
- Community Chest 7 grants given including 2 new groups, Grassroad Sharks being one of them, this is for younger people, which is good. Need to get better at publicising these for groups that don't know about them
- Transport Community Grant is new this year. Groups can apply to both Transport & Community Chest grants so they have more money available to them
- Events are very successful and well attended – Chip Shop Chips/Easter Tea/Fun Day
- Citizens Advice very successful, currently advising on cutting down gas & electric bills
- Credit Union is going strong, though the school side of it is dropping off a bit
- Housing Study has now been completed
- Job Club – this could be better attended, we are going to extend it into the afternoons to see if that brings more people in
- Football Pitch – work to reinstate it has finished and it should be ready for use in spring
- CCTV – 5 new cameras are being installed in the beginning of December
- New bus shelter installed and one upgraded
- Digital Club has been up and running for several months now
- All of the above are very successful, though Job Club could do with more take up

2. What have you spent?

- We have spent approximately £200,000 in total
- £300,000 has been drawn down, not all of that spent
- We have some big projects up and coming for the next year which means the spend is likely to increase
- Pete Duncan, our Big Local representative advised that most Big Local's have underspends' and we are not unique in this

3. What impact have you had?

- Some groups are not very forthcoming with providing feedback and evidence of on the impact of Community Chest & grants received.
- There is a big visual impact from Ronnie's Maintenance & garden work around the village
- Part funding the church loo has had a huge impact on the people using the building
- Bus shelter installation & refurbishment makes a big difference to people using them, especially in our wet & windy climate
- Re-instating the football pitch will have positive social, community cohesion and health impacts for users and spectators alike
- Funding of the solar panels for the Community Centre provides a significant financial benefit to the centre
- People have gained new qualifications as well as assistance in searching for and applying for new jobs. Access to computers for job searches and updating their Universal Job Match accounts to enable them to receive benefits
- This year's AGM in September saw a lot more people attending than previously, information provided here will inform more people on how the Big Local project works and operates
- There was good attendance in April at the public consultation regarding the purchase of the former British Legion land that has come up for sale in the middle of the village

-With some experience under their belts, board members are now getting more stuck in and better understand the workings of Big Local and are all evolving together

4. What have you learnt?

- That we can't please all the people all of the time
- To be very patient – nothing happens tomorrow, bureaucracy, red tape and working with other agencies slows things down.
- We could learn more by attending more Big Local training events which take place around the country. Cumbria is quite isolated geographically, PD our representative, asked if it would help if Big Local put an event on Carlisle, members felt that this would definitely help

5. Have you progressed on your vision and priorities?

- Our vision is to make Distington a better place to live:
- For our community to make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- Residents will have increased skills and confidence so that they can continue to identify and respond to needs in the future
- Residents will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them

-We are absolutely on course to achieve these:

- Locals have identified needs and met them
- Skills and confidence has been increased through being on the Board, a sub group or taking part in Jobclub, Digiclub, establishing and volunteering for groups (i.e. the Lunch Club, Good Grub Club etc)
- People have pulled together to make things happen
- Flexibility about change and new ways of working
- Visioning and prioritising
- purchasing a defibrillator for the village

- Home Group, a large housing provider in the area, is no longer represented on our Board or Sub Groups, probably due to staff cuts and restructuring. If they were still represented we would probably have had a bigger impact as they have willingly engaged in the past.

-Impact Housing still attends meetings and is very effective, caring and willing to get involved and work with us to make our community a better place to be.

- The 4 main projects that have helped to achieve our priorities are:

- Community Chest Grant
- Village Maintenance
- Community Events
- Citizens Advice (we fund weekly visits to Distington from them)

-We have now set up Distington Big Local Ltd and are working towards this becoming the LTO for DBL.

6. Do you need to refresh your vision & priorities?

No, we are on track and doing OK.

7. What changes are needed to existing projects in future?

-To try and speed things up i.e. we are still waiting for a decision on a bus shelter for Common End, this has dragged on for a very long time!

- We need to consider if we will continue to fund projects to the level we currently are in the future
- Job Club will be extended into the afternoon to see if that brings more people in
- Promote Community Chest Fund and Transport Fund more frequently

8. How can we engage with the community and get new people involved

- Community engagement is increasing – we had a good turnout for the consultation regarding the British Legion land and many more people (including new faces) attending the AGM this year as a result of which we have gained new board members
- we are financially supporting Grass Road Sharks (a new community team football group for young people) we need to publicise this and it will hopefully engage more people in DBL
- there is a feeling that some of the younger sub group members are a bit reluctant to join the Board, how can we make them feel more welcome and able to take part?
- The sub groups are working well now, there is a bigger differentiation between the Sub groups and the Board, decision making is getting quicker and more efficient

9. What new ideas do we have for future plans?

- If successful in buying the BL land, much more consultation will be done with the community to decide what the land will be used for
- Need to ensure we don't just focus on the BL land to the detriment of other projects.
- What up-skilling ideas are there? We are working with the Workers' Education Association to provide funded / subsidised courses for residents
- Star People is still running through Big Local – this is a useful resource for local business start ups
- There may be an extension to the Community Centre
- We are planning to provide computer Microsoft classes & a Raspberry Pi computer club (run by a volunteer), these will up-skill people
- Looking at developing the Village Maintenance project into a Community Enterprise
- Need to address derelict buildings in the villages
(-The council have said that the Queens Head is not yet in a derelict state)
- Be good to put on a community event on the Football pitch in the spring when its ready to use
- We feel we have had a good year, have worked hard and can now see some rewards