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What is Big Society?

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What is Big Society?

- Big Society is at the heart of Government's vision
- Three key areas
 - Public service reform
 - Empower communities
 - Lasting culture change
- Why?
 - Only 1 in 4 people feel that they can influence change



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The Shift

- “...this coalition has the potential for era-changing, convention-challenging, radical reform,” *David Cameron and Nick Clegg May 2010*
- Decentralisation, devolution & empowerment
- Empowering state, rather than an overpowering state
- Transferring power from the central state to local people and institutions
- When people know their actions can make a difference they are more motivated to get involved
- Decentralise to the lowest possible level



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Coalition Policies

Freedom, Fairness, Responsibility

Communities and Local Government (Chapter 4)

- ...We will promote decentralisation and democratic engagement, and we will end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals.

Social Action (Chapter 27)

- ...innovation and enthusiasm of civil society is essential in tackling the social, economic and political challenges that the UK faces today. We will take action to support and encourage social responsibility, volunteering and philanthropy, and make it easier for people to come together to improve their communities and help one another.

Crime and Policing (Chapter 6)

- ...we need radical action to reform our criminal justice system. We need police forces that have greater freedom from Ministerial control and are better able to deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour that blights people's lives, but which are much more accountable to the public they serve.



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But we have to remember...

- **The deficit reduction programme takes precedence over any of the other measures in this agreement, and the speed of implementation of any measures that have a cost to the public finances will depend on decisions to be made in the Comprehensive Spending Review.**



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Building the Big Society

Ambition: to put more power and opportunity into people's hands

“...isn't just the responsibility of just one or two departments. It is the responsibility of every department of Government, and the responsibility of every citizen too.”

1. Give Communities more power
2. Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
3. Transfer power from central to local government
4. Support co-ops, mutuals, charities & social enterprise
5. Publish government data



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Give Communities more power

- reform the planning system
- new powers to help communities save local facilities and services and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services
- train a new generation of community organisers



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Encourage people to take an active role in their communities

- encourage volunteering and involvement in social action
- encourage charitable giving and philanthropy
- National Citizens Service – 2 month programme for 16 year olds
- Big Society Day
- Civil Servants – Civic Service



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Transfer power from central to local government

- devolution of power and greater financial autonomy – LA freedom to respond to the demands of local people
- general power of competence – LA explicit freedom to act in best interests of voters
- abolish Regional Spatial Strategies – local housing and planning decisions



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Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises

- support the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises
- public sector workers a new right to form employee-owned co-operatives
- establish a 'Big Society Bank'



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Publish Government Data

- right to data
- monthly local crime data



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Related Big Society policies

- simpler for communities to provide homes for local people
- phase out the ring-fencing of grants to local government
- have a greater say over how taxpayers money is spent
- abolish the Comprehensive Area Assessment
- local communities greater control over public health budgets
- plans to allow new providers to enter the state school system



Big Society Champion

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Appointed Government Advisor and Member of House of Lords:

- Nat Wei, Executive Chair of The Big Society Network, <http://www.thebigsociety.co.uk/idea.html>
- Will advise the Government on all aspects of taking forward the Big Society and driving implementation across government.
- Initial phase designing the approach to building the Big Society and engaging with civil society groups, alongside Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society



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The three rules for CLG in future will be: localism, localism and localism

- Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation (including across Government)
- Big Society
- Planning policy



In the past CLG has given away money; in the future it will give away power



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Key Documents

- ‘Control Shift – Returning Power to Local Communities,’ Policy Green Paper - Conservative Party, 17th February 2009
http://www.conservatives.com/news/news_stories/2009/02/its_time_to_transfer_power_from_the_central_state_to_local_people.aspx
- ‘Building the Big Society,’ Coalition policy paper, 18th May 2010
<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/05/big-society-50248>
- ‘The Coalition: Our Programme for Government,’ HM Government, 20th May 2010 <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/05/the-coalition-our-programme-for-government-2-50350>
- ‘Queens Speech,’ Coalition Government’s Plans, 25th May 2010
<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/05/queens-speech-2010-2-50580>



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To conclude:

- The Big Society is a radical shift of power from central Government
- To respond effectively it needs to be across Luton
- Build on what we have, but go further
- How will Big Society work in Luton?