



Villages Together

Costed Vision, Action Plan and Legacy Statement

**Delivery Years
July 2023 – March 2026**

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Summary

In 2012 the villages of Woolavington and Puriton were awarded £1million Big Local funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The fund is managed and administered by Local Trust nationally, and the local Big Local programme in Woolavington and Puriton is being delivered by Villages Together Big Local.

The area comprises 3,907 residents most of whom live in detached and semi-detached housing with some terraced. Both villages have large open spaces with sports fields and also have a range of community buildings, including village halls. The villages are separated by a main road, with no footpath or cycle route and poor lighting.

The Villages Together Big Local is overseen by our Partnership, which comprises fifteen residents. The Locally Trusted Organisation, which is responsible to Local Trust for financial management, is SHAL Housing Limited – a community-based provider of social housing with over 760 homes for rent and shared ownership across Somerset.

To date, the Villages Together Partnership has worked hard to understand the needs and opportunities in the area, which have been included in three previous plans submitted in 2015, 2018, and 2021. In that time, we have supported a range of projects which:

- Tackled loneliness.
- Supported families; young people and older people.
- Helped to improve local/community facilities.
- Allocated a wide range of community grants.
- Supported community activities.
- Co-ordinated and ran a number of communities events.
- Improved the environment and accessibility.

Building on this work, over the past four months we have focused our attention on developing this plan, which also includes a costed vision and legacy statement. A total of £420,000 remains unspent in our Big Local Fund, and members of our Big Local Partnership and our workers have been listening, in depth – through face-to-face questionnaires – to residents. We've also conducted an on-line survey and hosted a number of consultation events – reaching hundreds of local people; asking them about their loves, concerns, and visions for the future; helping us develop our new big local programme and consider our legacy. The top three themes that have emerged are:

- The need for a Community Hub/Social Centre, with a Café in the Villages.
- Providing more activities for young people.
- Improving public transport/community transport.

Message from Vanda Crow, Chair of Villages Together Big Local

We are very pleased to submit this, our final plan – which has been produced following focused effort over a period of four months. Villages Together have forged new connections to deliver key projects, attracted new members to our Partnership Committee, and we are now sighted on the delivery of a programme which will achieve our legacy, to help create 'a networked community of residents and good neighbours who have positivity and pride in their area. Two linked villages united by the quality of their environment and useable and attractive green-space and community facilities'.

At the end of this planning process, I reflect that our original vision is still appropriate:

“Puriton and Woolavington will become two thriving Polden villages, where people are happy to live in an environment that meets the needs of everyone from new-born babies to the oldest residents”.

1. Introduction – Our Partnership and key partners

Background to the Big Local programme

In 2012, Villages Together were awarded funding from the Big Local programme. Supported with a £200m Big Lottery Fund investment and managed by Local Trust, Big Local is helping 150 small urban and rural communities across England to make their areas even better places to live. Each Big Local area has a total allocation, including investments, of around £1,199,500 of Lottery funding to spend over the period to September 2025, enabling residents to identify priorities that matter to them and take positive action in response.

Our Big Local Partnership

The Villages Together 'Terms of Reference' states that the partnership "shall consist of a minimum of 8 and up to a maximum of 20 voting members". Our Big Local partnership comprises 15 members who come from the two villages encompassed within our Big Local area – seven from Woolavington and seven from Puriton, plus the Chair. Whilst it is possible for Big Local partnerships to include organisations, our partnership comprises only of residents. Partnership members do, however, have affiliations with some key local organisations, including Woolavington and Puriton Parish Councils.

The partnership is chaired by Vanda Crow and there is a Vice Chair Alan Sharp. Meetings are held monthly and are supported by the Big Local Area Advisor – Sophie Cowdell – and sometimes two representatives of the Locally Trusted Organisation. All decisions are taken by a majority vote, except when decision making powers have been devolved to the workers or to specific 'Task and Finish Groups'.

Our Locally Trusted Organisation

Our Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO) is SHAL Housing Limited, which is a community-based provider of social housing with over 760 homes for rent and shared ownership across Somerset, providing safe, warm, and affordable homes to a decent standard for people who are homeless or in housing need.

In its capacity as LTO, SHAL provides Villages Together with financial management and support around contracted matters. SHAL also acts as the employer for the workers. Funds are drawn down from Local Trust according to the expenditure schedule in the Big Local Plan. They are then dispersed by SHAL in accordance with their standard procedures. SHAL is a supportive LTO, whose chief officer, Angela Gascoigne, is keen to help Villages Together achieve its ambitions.

Working with Partners

Our overall aim in this plan is to focus on working closely with key partners to help us deliver projects which meet our priorities. Through working in this way our intention is to maximise the impact and reach of our Big Local programme. Partners who have expressed a desire to work with us include Gravity, the primary schools in both villages, SHAL Housing, Homes in Sedgemoor, the Community Council for Somerset, and the Parish Councils.

2. The Context

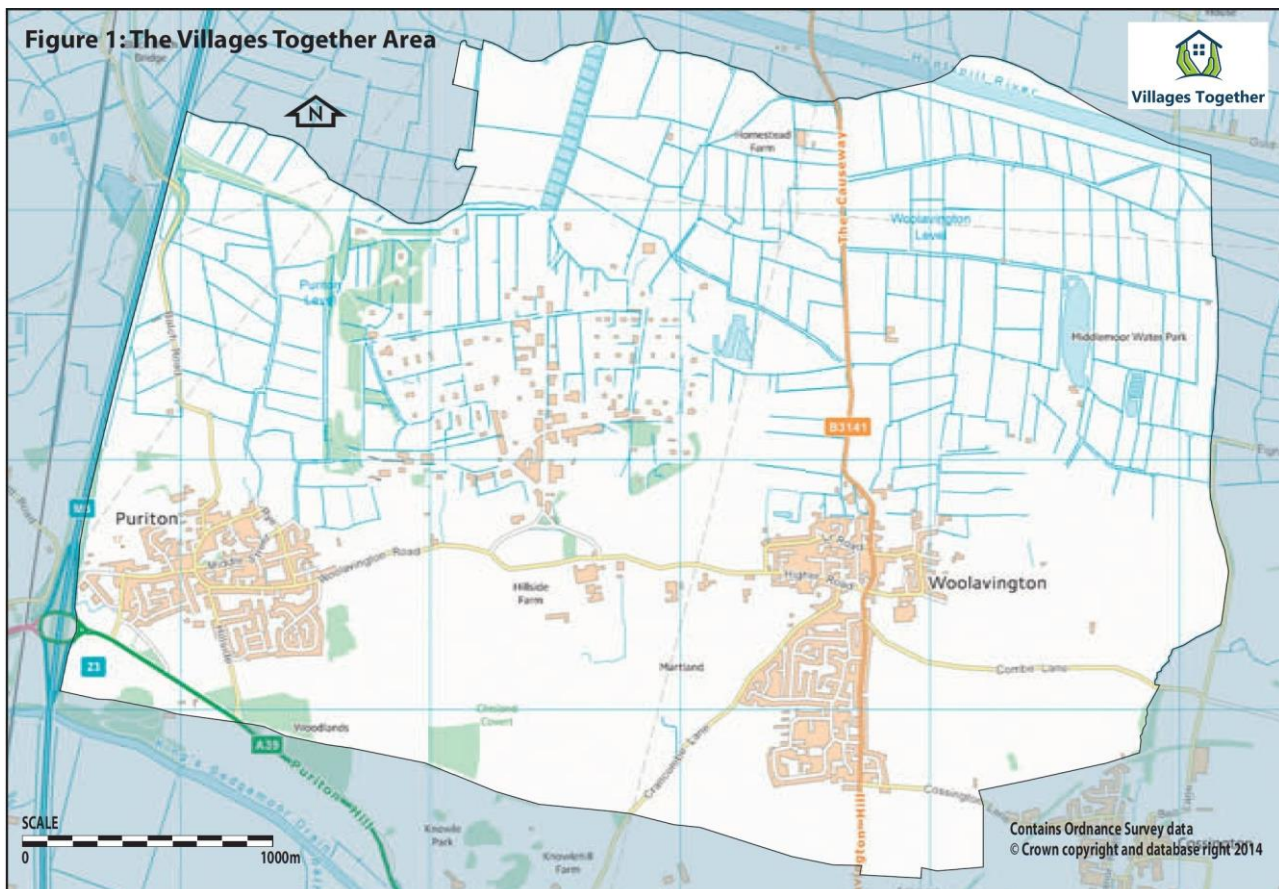
This section provides the context within which our plan has been prepared and includes our understanding of our area – the people and place. It also highlights opportunities for our Big Local to maximise its impact through working with developers to embrace planned changes in the area.

Local Trust requirements

Big Local is managed across England by Local Trust. While the programme is designed to be resident led and non-prescriptive, there are some requirements of each partnership. In particular, each area must have a Big Local Plan; a guide and action plan that a partnership follows, shares, and uses to guide expenditure and get others involved.

Any new Big Local Plan should incorporate:

- An **action plan** setting out the goals and activities for the next funding period. This includes a plan of priorities and action (what will be done, how it will be done, who will be involved, what resources are needed, and how these resources will be used well).
- A **costed vision** setting out, in broad terms, how the remaining funds will be used over the rest of the Big Local programme. This describes what we want to have achieved to make a lasting change linked to a broad or 'indicative' budget. This is useful in costing each of the priorities using the remaining funding in the period to September 2025.
- A **legacy statement** setting out what we hope to leave behind after our Big Local money has been spent. This briefly sets out the impact that Big Local will have had on the community by the end of the Big Local programme in 2025/26. It addresses what will remain in the area after the Big Local funds have been spent and how we will aim to ensure lasting change.



Our people and place:

Puriton and Woolavington are villages in the Sedgemoor area of Somerset. The villages are 4.5 miles away from their closest town, Bridgwater.

People

The 2022 Local Insight data (Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion) shows that the joint population of our Big Local area is 3,907 people and almost predominantly White British (97.7%). The joint population has increased since our last Big Local Plan (3,840 in 2021), due to the substantial build programmes in both villages.

While none of the neighbourhoods in our Big Local area feature in the most deprived 20% of areas in England, careful scrutiny of the Local Insight data does present some significant findings. For example, 117 children in our area live in 'absolute low-income families', which at 14.3% is higher than the South West average of 11.7%. 21% of the people in our area have a limiting long-term illness compared with 18% across South West. 26% of the population have no qualifications compared with 21% across South West.

A higher-than-average number of residents claim benefits, including:

- 12.8% of people claiming Attendance Allowance claimants (South West average = 10.5%),
- 14.1% claiming Universal Credit (South West average = 12.0%)
- 10.4% of the residents are Pension Credit claimants (South West average = 9.3%)
- 9.6% are Housing Benefit claimants (South West average = 8.1%)
- 8.6% claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (South West average = 6.4%),
- 7.4% being Universal Credit claimants as 'unemployed' (South West average = 6.7%),
- 0.5% being on Income Support (South West average = 0.4%)

We also note that – compared with England and the South West – there are comparatively more people aged 65 years and older at 29.0% (18.5% in England and 22.4% in the South West) and a higher-than-average number of 'pensioner households' – 30.5% – compared with the South West average of 24.3%. Considering this, it is perhaps pertinent that a higher-than-average number of people – 508 (13.4%) – are providing unpaid care (South West average is 10.8%), with 127 of them providing 50+ hours of unpaid care per week (3.3% as opposed to the South West average of 2.4%).

Environment

Most of the housing comprises detached and semi-detached housing with some terraced. The majority 1,322 (79.8%) is owner occupied with 551 rented, largely with a social landlord. Both villages have large open spaces with sports fields. The villages are separated by a main road, with no footpath or cycle route and poor lighting. The M5 is very close to Puriton and, whenever the motorway closes, the whole area – including Woolavington – becomes completely gridlocked.

Community Buildings

As well as all our lovely open spaces, we have two shops (one including a Post Office), a hairdresser's, a chip shop, a chemist's, and a Doctors' Surgery in Woolavington, and a butchers, hairdressers, and Post Office in Puriton – all of which we value and are keen to support. Puriton also has the Puriton Inn.

The 37 Club lies between Puriton and Woolavington. Both villages have a village hall, and Puriton has a Sports Centre; Woolavington a Pavilion on the Sports Field. The Clist Room (a Church Hall) is in Puriton and there is also Bitham Walk Hall in Woolavington. All venues are popular within their neighbouring communities and offer a broad range of activities and opportunities for all ages.

Education and Early Years Provision

Both Puriton and Woolavington primary schools are part of the same multi-academy trust – the Futura Learning Trust. As a result, both Head Teachers work closely together. Woolavington School has an attached Nursery. Puriton has a private Day-Care Nursery, plus a Pre-school (run by a CIO).

Our opportunities – existing and planned changes

There are significant development proposals in our Big Local area, which will commence during the period of this plan. We identify them here since they are predicted to provide opportunities to work in partnership, as well as helping to inform where our Big Local efforts are likely to have maximum impact.

Housing Development

There are plans for two separate sites in the village of Woolavington – one for 125 homes to the north of Cossington Lane, and one for 95 homes on Woolavington Road. The plans include 30% affordable housing, plus public open space, a new vehicular access point from Woolavington Road, as well as surface water mitigation and attenuation.

There are also plans to build a further 120 houses on the eastern edge of Puriton – with 30% affordable homes – which will fill the gap between existing built development and the new Gravity link road.

Gravity Enterprise Park

The Gravity Enterprise Zone and ‘internationally renowned’ smart campus is predicted to help create around 4,000 high quality jobs. The development is located between the villages of Puriton and Woolavington on the former Royal Ordnance factory site. Gravity’s plans are to provide a destination for international investment, whilst creating social value in Sedgemoor through creating jobs, training, and connections to wider opportunities.



As part of the development, Gravity has constructed a link road to connect the new enterprise zone and smart campus with the M5, via a new junction south of the A39 (Puriton Hill). This road also connects the villages. Eight metres of screening planting along the site’s eastern boundary will provide a buffer between the site and the link road.

Gravity is working closely with the local community and plans to provide a number of benefits to the villages. A significant part of this will be the improvement of connections between Puriton and Woolavington – with a proposal to provide a safe and attractive route

for walking and cycling; schemes to reduce traffic speed and to improve highway safety within and between the villages. The proposed walking and cycling path will be the first off-road route between the two villages, and to the 37 Club.

New native trees will be planted along the route to further enhance the area. The path will be lit at night, and dog waste and litter bins will also be incorporated. Gravity has a commitment to provide health and wellbeing – including gym and sports facilities – including 4G pitches, which could be made available.

Improving connections between Puriton and Woolavington also underlines Gravity’s commitment to support Villages Together and our community-driven initiatives to improve the villages as places to live and work.

3. Preparing our new VT plan

The priorities and projects included within this plan have been informed by the experience of the Villages Together partnership to date and draws on local engagement and face-to-face consultations with residents and additional on-line consultations.

Learning from our previous plan

We have supported some worthwhile projects over the period of our last plan to help tackle loneliness, support young people, and improve community facilities – including the very successful ‘Pump Track’ in Puriton, a new Skate Park and improvements to the play-area in the ‘Top’ Sports Field at Woolavington. We also provided £29k in community grants and invested £11k into supporting community events and activities – including celebrations in both villages for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and supporting an ‘Eat Festival’ in Woolavington in 2022 and in Puriton in 2023.

A big positive has been the recruitment of our two workers, who have had an impact in terms of bringing people into the Big Local through the recruitment of new Partnership members and setting up Task and Finish Groups to work on specific areas of our plan.

However, as with our previous plan, our spending has been considerably lower than forecast, and in March 2022, following a visit to our area by Matt Leach – the Chief Executive of Local Trust – he wrote to us to raise his concern that Villages Together still had a huge amount of funding remaining unspent; approximately £800k to fully invest by March 2026. And we had to face the reality that we were at risk of significantly underspending and under-delivering against our budget and action plan. We understood that for the Local Trust and their trustees to have confidence in our abilities, we would need create a more dynamic, proactive plan that would see us spend in the region of £225k per-year over the next three years – over five times what we’d spent on average per-year to date!

Between May and July 2022, the partnership, ‘task and finish groups’, and local community organisations – supported by the staff team, Area Advisor, Shared Assets (through the Big Local ‘Make It Happen’ programme), and Creating Solutions – developed a revised action plan to ensure that the £329k funds were used to deliver projects and programmes that met the Villages Together priorities for the final seven-month period of our previous Big Local plan.

A revised action plan – for the period August 2022 to March 2023 – was approved by Local Trust in July 2022. This revised plan supported some of the original plan’s commitments, projects, and programmes – however, the majority of the plan’s funds – £193,737 – were allocated to three relatively large capital projects, which would improve local community facilities and develop local organisations, increasing their capacity to manage and develop sustainable community hubs.

Unfortunately, by February 2023, it was clear that the Villages Together Partnership was not going to meet its spend targets, and a three-month extension was sought from – and granted by – Local Trust.

At the time of writing (May 2023), the projects are all on-course to spend their allotted budgets by the end of June 2023.

Plan Review

In November 2022 we held a plan review workshop. It was a day-long event on a Saturday and twelve members of the Villages Together partnership attended.

At the workshop we worked in groups and individually to think through all the eight questions of a Big Local plan review, and enjoyed having the time to reflect on what has been an interesting, tough, and productive 18 months (at that stage).

Question 1. Under your current plan, what have you delivered in your Big Local area?

We have delivered mainly to plan. Part way through 2022, we were asked to create a more accurate action plan to ensure we kept our spend on target. This resulted in a combined effort to make decisions and understand the current barriers to delivery.

Our community buildings budget line was delivered slightly differently in that we selected the projects we would like to support and paid for additional professional capacity to help develop those projects. This resulted in the increase in capacity and updating of two local organisations so they will be fit for the future, and the creation of a new one. We didn't anticipate any of these outcomes, but they will be a very real and useful legacy for Villages Together.

Project, Events, etc.	Community Grants
Puriton Pump Track	Woolavington WI
Woolavington Skate Park	Woolavington Afternoon Group
Woolavington under 5s' play equipment	Puriton's J'Dan Café – equipment / resources for community café project
Jon, Jenny, and Ade Murphy	Woolavington Allotments – car park refurbishment
Dreamscheme	Woolavington Handbells
Willow Youth Theatre	Woolavington PPC – electric piano
Woolavington School IT project	Woolavington Craft Group
'Name the Pathway' competition – including prizes and books for both primary schools	Puriton's J'Dan Café – celebratory event
'eat:Polden Hills' food festival	Woolavington Village Hall – Noticeboards and Insulation
Spooky Saturday – family focused Hallowe'en event in Puriton	Puriton 'Christmas Window Trail' Competition
Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in both villages	Puriton Primary School – Library books and PTA Gardening Area Development
CCTV (and Wi-Fi) installed at the Woolavington Pavilion to reduce crime	Polden Play football sessions with Bridgwater United – in both villages
	Woolavington PTA Summer Fete
	Woolavington Village Show
	Puriton Allotment Association – Beehives

Question 2. Under your current plan, what difference have you made in your Big Local area?

We have had our most successful plan to date. Not only have we managed to spend almost to target, but we have delivered high profile events, increased the number of residents on our Big Local partnership and have more and more people talking positively about Villages Together and the work we do. Specifically we have had a positive impact on the list below:

- Community engagement.
- Inclusivity.
- More people have joined up.
- Task and Finish group help communicate with a wider group of people.
- Working differently.
- Better understanding of how we can support other organisations and individuals in our community.
- Change of profile – now far more positive.
- Project workers (big difference) – Got groups thinking more laterally.

- Using money differently.
- The way the partnership working has changed.
- Task & Finish groups capture all issues.
- Under 5s' play equipment, J'Dan Pump Track, and Skatepark Woolavington – engaging with young people in a positive activity. Improves health and wellbeing.
- eat:Polden Hills Festival – Improved reputation of the villages.
- J'Dan Café – Creates social engagement and improves community spirits.
- Social Media/Communications/ Big Cheque Photos - Community awareness of VT has improved – appreciation of VT increased.
- Empowering people.
- Increased sense of ownership.
- Increased opportunities for people to lead rather than be led.
- CCTV – reduced Anti-Social Behaviour – Feeling safe and confident.
- Community Grants are a success.

Our workers have helped us capture more information from the community and from the projects we have worked with. Since December we have been having conversations with individuals in our community and we have consulted with over 400 people for our new plan.

Due to the mid plan need for a new action plan, we have ensured that we are clearly on our way to delivering our vision. Our projects have been structured around the current plan, and as such have moved us closer to realising that legacy and vision.

Question 3. Under your current plan, what have been the partnership's proudest achievements and why?

At our plan review workshop, all the Villages Together partnership members present shared what they were most proud of in the list below.

- Working together.
- Task & Finish Group – Under 5s' play equipment.
- Getting the Puriton Pump Track going.
- Supporting the community for the Jubilee Celebrations.
- New mural at Woolavington.
- Task & Finish groups.
- Jubilee.
- Task & Finish groups.
- Under 5s' play equipment process.
- Spooky Saturday.
- Getting the play park for under-fives for Woolavington and café in Puriton.
- Skate Park Woolavington.
- CCTV at the Pavilion site.
- Working together and building relationships.
- Being part of a group, which considers both villages and has worked together.
- Pump Track.
- Food Festival.
- Supporting the governance review of Puriton Village Hall, Puriton Sports Centre, and Woolavington Playing Field Association.

Question 4. What have you learnt from the delivery of your current Big Local plan?

We have learnt an enormous amount during the duration of our current plan. most notably:

- How to communicate/listen to each other and with our community.
- Respect others on the partnership.
- Broader vision and better understanding of what we can achieve and what we still need to achieve.
- Governance and Policies from Big Local – we have much better understanding.
- Responsibilities of/as a committee.
- Visibility pays.
- Relationships and communities.
- How to support the improvement of our facilities – not “the Bank of VT”, for example consultancy. It wasn’t just money that was needed but extra professional capacity.
- Importance of knowing about LTO/budgets.
- How to support youth and children – what works and doesn’t work locally.
- Need to think critically as opposed to emotionally.
- PR/Media are important.
- Inclusivity.
- Need to leave a legacy.
- Communication is important – internal as well as external. Communication has improved the perception of VT and what VT is about.
- Actions speak louder than words – getting things done/being visible/realistic.
- Previous capacity of time/resource was an issue – now we are more strategic – people feel empowered.
- People now come with a realistic idea of what VT is about – More of an understanding of what it is. Members are more confident and contributing more. Previously, members used to get frustrated and leave the partnership.
- Having paid workers is a good idea. They are objective; are mediators, have experience & development, and having two means they complement each other.
- VTP now have a better understanding of the parameters of the project/Big Local.
- Created a better relationship with both villages.

Question 5. How are you progressing towards your legacy?

Our legacy statement in our current plan is: *‘A networked community of residents and good neighbours who have positivity and pride in their area. Two linked villages united by the quality of their environment and useable and attractive green-space and community facilities.’*

We are much closer to delivering our legacy now than we were at the start of this plan. We now know more of the issues that people are facing within our community and have benefited from having workers who have formed bonds with people in our community who have not previously been involved.

We have also had a major shift away from being a funder of projects and have become an enabler and supporter of projects and ideas. Crucially, we have learnt that for people to access services and build connections, we need to create a space in our community where people are welcome, where they feel safe and where they can access support.

Question 6. What needs to happen to enable you to achieve your legacy?

We need to rethink how we have done plans in the past. We have learnt that there are risks with having delivery partners around timescale and their capacity, so we would like to deliver a project ourselves.

We want to be more targeted and have a close eye on our budget and what money is being spent. We also see the importance of milestones and have key dates earmarked for decision making around a project, so we are aware if timescales are drifting for whatever reason and the impact on the delivery/spend of a project. We know we will need to make big decisions often and be flexible to ensure the best value and success of Big Local here. Although the Villages Together partnership will not become a legacy organisation, we want to ensure the new organisations that we have supported in this current plan continue to thrive and in effect be legacy organisations for Villages Together. By building their capacity we will be leaving organisations fit for the current funding landscape, and we hope with renewed energy and vision about what they can achieve.

Question 7. What are the current needs and opportunities in your Big Local area?

As a partnership we identified the following opportunities at our workshop:

- Space to meet neighbours; no meeting space other than village halls.
- Luncheon clubs.
- Talking Café – can this be extended to the VT area?
- We need to understand why the people from Upper Woolavington don't attend events in Lower Woolavington? Is it lack of transport? Is it too difficult to walk back up the hill for older people?
- Not straight forward to book Bitham Walk Hall.
- Warm Spaces – useful to connect with residents.
- Access to IT/Wifi – Bitham – Somerset Skills and Learning?
- Transport – addressing loneliness, isolation, and mental ill health.
- Food Pantry?
- Budgeting.
- Purplespoon Café – cooking on a budget.

Since the workshop, we have spoken to over 100 people and reached thousands of people online with over 400 engaging with our consultations electronically. We have been able to focus our final plan around the three overwhelming project areas that our community needs, wants, and is willing to support. They are:

- A community hub, and possible spoke,
- Young people – activities and support, and
- Transport – moving people where they want to go when it is needed.

Question 8. What help do you need to deliver your next plan and achieve your legacy?

We will need help to develop a business plan for our hub to guarantee we make decisions to ensure a legacy and future for the project.

Having made such an impact on 2022 and 2023, we now have more fundable projects than we can support. We recognise this as a sign of success, that people have grabbed hold of their potential and that of their community to drive forward projects that will make the area and even better place to live.

With this in mind, we would also like to build on the increased capacity of our delivery partners and offer some additional support to them – either by offering fundraising advice or fundraising clinics – or to continue with the targeted work we are currently doing with them by means of funding a worker. One big area for us has been transport, so it would be useful to know if and how other Big Local areas have addressed this issue. We have successful community transport schemes in Somerset, but it is always useful to know if any Big Local areas have managed to make it work and how.

There may also be other areas of support we need, especially as we draw to a close. Possibly around communications or even drawing in HR support if our hub project is successful. It is difficult to say for certain at this stage.

The Consultation

In preparing to develop this new plan, we have considered how to encompass some of the Big Local Outcomes in our approach – enabling our community to become better able to identify local needs, we decided to conduct an ‘active listening’ approach to our community consultation and engagement process, using the Root Solutions Listening Matters (RSLM) technique; a series of questions designed to encourage people to take action in response to the needs they identify.

From December 2022 to March 2023, in addition to our two workers – Jenny Manners and Jon Cousins – we asked each of the 15 local residents on our Big Local Partnership to listen to people in their village using the RSLM questions, helping to increase Partners’ skills and confidence, so that they can continue to use this technique in the future to identify and respond to needs.

Over the four months, we conducted 119 in-depth surveys – listening to residents in both Puriton and Woolavington – asking them what they loved about their village; their concerns; their dreams for the future; and what they felt might improve our Villages Together Big Local area.

Loves:

Residents told us it was the friendliness of local people that they loved most about where they lived, with ‘community spirit’ also being greatly valued.

Many locals told us that they loved being in a rural location, with ‘access to the countryside’ and ‘a quiet place to live’ being very important.

‘Convenient transport links’ (particularly the Dunball Interchange) and were also significant to some residents.

Concerns:

The main concern for residents is the ‘over development’ of the villages and local area, and the subsequent ‘loss of countryside’ that this would entail. This concern links directly to people’s love of living in a rural area, and the impact that ‘over development’ and large numbers of new residents might have on the ‘community spirit’.

Other concerns related to access, including the impact of traffic – especially speeding vehicles – the increase in the number of vehicles travelling through the villages and the increase in the number of cars in the villages – especially the number of cars requiring on-street parking, and the lack of suitable parking spaces. However, a major concern with access is the lack of public transport – particularly, residents felt that the cost of taxis was too expensive and that the bus services through the villages does not run regularly enough – running once every two hours.

Around a third of residents in Woolavington were particularly concerned about the effect of anti-social behaviour and crime on the community (including county lines drug dealing, domestic violence, and vandalism). Others were concerned about isolation and loneliness, and how these impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Around a quarter of Woolavington residents interviewed also felt that there was a ‘divide’ between the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ of the village.

Dreams for the future:

When asked what their dreams for the future might be, 82% of the people interviewed thought that there should be some sort of community hub or social centre – with a café and/or bar – in their village. The vision for this hub or centre was different from that of the village hall or the sports centre/pavilion – it was more a place for residents to drop-in and socialise, and perhaps access services or support.

Around half of those interviewed wanted to see more activities for young people, and it was an opinion expressed by some residents that this could help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.

What might improve the villages?

The need for better public transport or community transport was the top answer here – the impact of not being able to drive or own a car, especially on the oldest and youngest members of the community, was clear. Many residents who currently drive were also worried about the effect on their lives if they ever had to give up driving or couldn't afford to run a car.

The desire for a community hub or social centre with a café and/or bar was also seen as something that would greatly improve life in the villages.

Top Priorities:

The top three priorities, established as a result of listening to 119 residents, are:

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages (suggested by 67 people)
- 2) More activities for Young People (suggested by 34 people)
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport (suggested by 25 people)

On-line Consultation:

To widen our consultation, and involve more local people in the development of our plan, we conducted an on-line poll through the Meta/Facebook platform, targeting three Facebook Groups:

- **Puriton People** (3.2k members)
- **Woolavington Past, Present, Future** (3.3k members)
- **Woolavington Events and Groups** (1.2k members)

We asked members of the groups: *“Do you agree with these priorities? Please tick the ones you feel are most important to you. Please use the comments below to post your own ideas.”* The results are as follows:

Puriton People

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages = 37% - 42 votes
- 2) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport = 34% - 40 votes
- 3) More activities for Young People = 29% - 33 votes

Woolavington Past, Present, Future

- 1) More activities for Young People = 30% - 48 votes
- 2) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages = 29% - 49 votes
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport = 22% - 37 votes

Additional suggestions:

- 4) Speed Humps around Woolavington Estate = 13% - 20 votes
- 5) Skating ring and netball / football field = 2% - 4 votes
- 6) More street lightening at night = 2% - 4 votes
- 7) CCTV = 2% 2 - votes
- 8) 20 mph limit around village, especially Woolavington Hill = 0% - 1 vote

Woolavington Events and Groups

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages = 40% - 18 votes
- 2) More activities for Young People = 32% - 14 votes
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport = 28% - 12 votes

eat:Polden Hills Festival:

In addition, we asked a further 121 people for their preferences at Villages Together's food festival – eat:Polden Hills – on Sunday, 30th April 2023.

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages = 44% - 53 votes
- 2) More activities for Young People = 30% - 36 votes
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport = 26% - 32 votes

Overall Totals – from all three groups, plus eat:Polden Hills:

1. A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages – Total = 162 votes
2. More activities for Young People – Total = 131 votes
3. Improving Public Transport/Community Transport – Total = 121 votes

Total votes received = 414 votes

Plus another 31 votes for other items...

Unique users who voted = 291 residents

Top Priorities – Combined Results:

The top three priorities, from consulting 410 residents (10.5% of our Big Local area population), are:

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages (229 people)
- 2) More activities for Young People (165 people)
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport (146 people)

4. Our Legacy and Costed Vision

Our legacy statement

We hope to create a united Villages Together area benefiting from the opportunities generated by our Big Local programme. We aim to be the catalyst of sustained improvements and to achieve our summary legacy statement.

“A networked community of residents and good neighbours who have positivity and pride in their area. Two linked villages united by the quality of their environment and useable and attractive green-space and community facilities.”

We aim to achieve this through focusing on activities that could serve the community well in the long-term and are important foundations for other projects to flourish.

We consider this will be achieved through:

- Developing strong links with partners; in particular, those providing services to our community – such as schools and a host of voluntary and community organisations.
- Working in conjunction with developers to maximise the long-term benefits of proposals for our community – and, in particular: Gravity, the councils, and other developers, including those developing housing.
- Being the ‘seed investment’; giving residents the skills and networks to change and adapt.
- Linking people together and to activities in their communities through accessible and integrated ‘social and community support’ resource. This type of legacy has a precedent in many Big Local areas and is championed by the Local Trust as the ‘Community Hub’ model; through this model we aim to address those concerns raised during our consultation and engagement work, such as helping to address anti-social behaviour, supporting families and providing more activities for young people, improving access to public and community transport, or helping to reduce the impact of increased traffic through the villages, as well tackling issues that lead to loneliness, isolation, and mental health problems.

In summary, we want our legacy to be about connecting people, convening partnerships, and coordinating participation – as well as celebrating places and creating projects!

Our priorities and how we will meet the Big Local outcomes

Our Priorities

To deliver our programme and contribute to our legacy, we have determined three main priorities, each of which includes a number of important projects.

- 1) A need for Community Hub/Social Centre with Café in the Villages
- 2) More activities for Young People
- 3) Improving Public Transport/Community Transport

Plus, we have an additional, overarching, fourth priority:

- 4) Making Big Local Happen in Villages Together

Our Way of Working

Through the preparation of our plan, we have discussed the principles behind its delivery.

- Building local capacity – encouraging local residents to get involved, take part in our Task and Finish Groups, organise events and activities (such as the recent Platinum Jubilee and Coronation celebrations), form self-help groups, engage with local organisations – this approach is fundamental to our way of working.
- Working with partners – such as SHAL Housing, Homes in Sedgemoor, the Community Council for Somerset, eat:Festivals, the Parish Councils – is crucial to our delivery arrangements. In this way, we consider we can maximise our impact and visibility. Where possible, we aim to combine resources to make the most of what we have.
- Making the most of what already exists – through signposting and helping to access services.
- Helping to kick-start or enhance projects that can become sustainable.

How this will achieve the Big Local outcomes

Projects and activities within each priority will contribute to the four BL outcomes and are emphasised in our action plan within the next section.

1. Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.
2. People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future.
3. The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.
4. People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

Our Costed Vision

We estimate that we have a £420,000 budget until March 2026. To achieve our vision, we consider the most realistic option is to enable spending to September 2025 – though with a run out over the final year for reporting. We've determined a total allocation for each of our four priorities, as well as spend for the plan period. The total spend for each of the priorities is shown in the table below.

Priority 1: Community HUB/Social Centre	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Bitham Walk Hall Community Hub 'Pilot' Lease / operating costs	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000		£80,000
Spoke and Hub Activities – Puriton	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000		£20,000
Priority 1 Total	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000		£100,000

Priority 2: More Activities for Young People	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Woolavington Sports Field Drainage	90,000						£90,000
Inspired Schools Free Places for VT School Children. May + Oct + Feb Half-Term. 20 children x 14 days over year, inc. food	6,300	3,500	6,300	3,500			£19,600
Priority 2 Total	96,300	3,500	6,300	3,500			£109,600

Priority 3: Improving public/community transport	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Minibus – lease and operating costs	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000		£50,000
Priority 3 Total	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000		£50,000

Priority 4: Making Big Local Happen	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Staff Wages	30,500	30,500	30,500	30,500	16,400		£138,400
Professional Fees	2,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	£8,000
Core Costs	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,000	1,000	£8,000
Priority 4 Total	34,000	34,000	33,000	33,000	18,400	2,000	£154,400

Priorities 1-4. Community Grants	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Up to £500 Community Grants Scheme	3,000		3,000				£6,000
Grants Total	3,000		3,000				£6,000

TOTAL PLAN COSTS **£420,000**

TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE **£420,000**

Previous Plans, Grants, and Spend since 2015

Grant type	Grant offer	Grant cancelled	Underspend repaid	Total spend
Getting Started	£ 20,000.00			£ 20,000.00
Creating your plan	£ 2,000.00			£ 2,000.00
Pathway	£ 11,500.00		-£ 1,406.60	£ 10,093.40
June 2015 Plan	£ 92,850.00	-£ 46,425.00	-£ 27,747.44	£ 18,677.56
September 2016 Plan	£212,530.00	-£133,355.00	-£ 70,329.98	£ 8,845.02
October 2017 Plan	£227,704.00	-£140,849.00	-£ 3,436.21	£ 83,418.79
January 2019 Plan	£740,500.00	-£403,460.00	-£182,854.79	£ 154,185.21
March 2021 Plan	£522,000.00		-£296,400.37	£ 225,599.63
August 2022 Plan	£329,295.00		-£ 72,614.61*	£ 256,680.39*
July 2023 Plan	£420,000.00			£ 420,000.00
Total grants				<u>£1,199,500.00</u>
Total available (including investment return)				<u>£1,199,500.00</u>

Detailed Revised Plan Spend – August 2022

Priority	Full Grant	Spend June 2023	Underspend
Environmental Improvements and Linkages	£ 20,799.00	£ 0.00	£ 20,799.00
Community Activities and Events	£ 22,347.00	£ 21,697.00*	£ 650.00*
Family and Community Support	£ 14,592.00	£ 14,592.00	£ 0.00
Improving Local Facilities	£193,737.00	£167,837.19*	£ 25,899.81*
Making Big Local Happen	<u>£ 77,820.00</u>	<u>£ 52,554.20*</u>	<u>£ 25,265.80*</u>
Total	<u>£329,295.00</u>	<u>£256,680.39*</u>	<u>£ 72,614.61*</u>

* These figures are informed 'guesstimates'.

5. Our Villages Together Action Plan

Introduction – ‘our plan on a page’

Following identification of priorities and key projects, we built our plan and milestones through our partnership meetings and our very active ‘WhatsApp’ group – where we discussed:

- The nature of the different projects for each priority.
- How each would be delivered, e.g. through our project worker, in partnership, bringing in or commissioning extra help.

From these discussions, we have determined an allocation of spend against each of our priorities, which informed our costed vision. The resultant ‘plan on a page’ is included as Appendix 1 – our key projects and what action we will take to delivery are identified below.

Priority 1: Community Hub/Social Centre with Community Spoke

This project will be managed by the Villages Together Big Local Partnership, and run as a pilot to explore the potential of a ‘Community Hub’ in the South Ward of Woolavington, with a satellite ‘Community Spoke’ in Puriton. The project will offer local people a safe and accessible space, providing social and community support; helping to address social deprivation issues identified by local people, such as:

- Tackling poverty,
- Providing health and wellbeing support (including improving mental health, reducing isolation, and encouraging physical activity and fitness),
- Reducing anti-social behaviour and crime (including domestic violence, vandalism, and drugs).

The social and community support facilities within the Hub will be accessible to people and communities from across the Polden Ridge, and we envision the Spoke’s development during this Big Local Plan period – with the potential for a network of Spokes in other villages over time.

Need – The need for this project was established through our recent community consultation. In the first stage, 82% of the people interviewed thought that there should be some sort of Community Hub or Social Centre in their village. In the second stage, around 40% of the people engaged wished to have a Hub or Centre in the Big Local area.

During our consultation, it was clear that many people wanted the Hub or Centre to be a ‘drop-in’ space – with a café and/or bar – different to a Village Hall that’s hired; a space for residents to socialise and meet others, as well as somewhere that provides help, advice, and support.

This desire for a Hub or Centre is not new to our area. In March 2018, an outline business plan was created for the ‘Polden Project’, a Hub type building to provide a community health and wellbeing resource based in Woolavington’s South Ward.

This project was unable to be realised due to lack of an appropriate location within the ward (suitable premises/space). The organisations involved in the development of the Polden Project are also potential stakeholders in our Hub. They are:

- Polden Medical Practice (based in Woolavington)
- Woolavington Parish Council
- Woolavington Residents Association
- Bawdrip Parish Council
- Cossington Parish Council

Over a five-month period – from January to May 2023 – our Villages Together workers have been trialling the Community Hub concept in Woolavington's Bitham Walk Community Hall. They've been working with a group of partner organisations to 'test' the Hub concept on a weekly basis – these include: Homes in Sedgemoor's Warm Spaces programme, the Bitham Walk Community Co-ordinators group, the Community Council for Somerset's Village Agent, SHAL's Housing Officer, and members of our Villages Together 'Community Hub Task and Finish Group' (which has members from Woolavington Parish Council, Woolavington Community Foundation, Woolavington Playing Field Association, Polden Medical Practice, and the Little Nippers Playgroup).

The weekly Hub sessions have incorporated 'Warm Woolly Wednesdays', a Warm Space provision that ran between January and March, and a 'Talking Café' running from March until the end of June.

Currently open from 11 am until 1 pm, these sessions have been very successful and positive, attracting an average 20 people per week. Some residents come specifically for help or advice; others drop-in to spend time socialising. Community volunteers provide free refreshments – hot drinks, biscuits, and cakes. During the Warm Woolly Wednesdays Warm Space sessions, a simple hot meal was also available for anyone who wanted it, free of charge.

Objectives – To enable local people to access services that improve their health, wellbeing, and sense of belonging; to create connections and reduce isolation; to volunteer and support others within the community. Contributing to Big Local Outcomes 1, 2, 3, & 4.

Project – Bitham Walk Community Hall is owned by Somerset Council (the Unitary Authority). Central to the South Ward estate, it is ideally suited for use as a Community Hub. The building has wheelchair friendly access, and contains a fairly large hall space, a separate kitchen, a toilet block (which include a disabled toilet), and an office space, which can also be used for private interviews and confidential sessions as required/appropriate.

Villages Together's plan is to lease this Hall for two years; to run a Community Hub pilot project, exploring the concept of an accessible and integrated 'social and community support' centre that would link to the work of the Police, Social Housing Providers, Local Authority/Council facilities and amenities – providing access to a wide range of services for local people – helping to address key issues that have been identified from police and crime reports, as well as tackling loneliness and isolation, the digital divide, and other complex social needs within the community.

We believe bringing service providers together will create a better 'public service offer' – enabling access to support, information, and advice on site in a preventative approach that enables individuals, families, and our community to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating.

Our Community Hub will provide a range of public and voluntary sector services in one place and would incorporate a reception area, rooms for service delivery, and a meeting place – which could be a community café or similar social space providing food and refreshments at an affordable price for the local community.

Our Spoke will encompass a wide range of facilities, services, and groups. It will help establish a locally based network with the Hub; working in a more collaborative way to enable the public to navigate all the relevant support available to them in our area – helping to improve mental health, reduce loneliness and social isolation, and build community cohesion.

As our social and community support Hub and Spoke project develops, it will host and work closely with partners from statutory and voluntary agencies. Co-location for many agencies and the community is beneficial because the travel distances for providers – and for rural service users – can involve higher travel costs, opportunity costs, and unproductive time for staff.

We are also exploring the possibility of developing a 'Local Pantry' – a service that provides food directly to locals suffering from food insecurity – where users pay a low monthly fee and in return can choose groceries worth many times more of shopping. This could be further enhanced through a community growing project, which could be delivered by the local charity 'Seed of Hope'.

Utilising the Hub and Spoke model, we hope to help deliver the following outcomes for our residents:

- Better access to public services that are joined up, cost effective, and available;
- A community in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised;
- A community that is well connected;
- A community that better enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances;

Our approach will, among other things, develop an infrastructure to support:

- A single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice and assistance;
- A platform to develop community capacity and volunteering;
- Opportunities for parents and families to improve their relationships and parenting skills;
- Opportunities for vulnerable people to seek support and be signposted to other services as appropriate;
- Provide flexible community space for people to meet, share interests, and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation.

Partners – The Community Hub/Social Centre will work with a wide range of partners, which will include our existing 'trial project' partners: Homes in Sedgemoor, Bitham Walk Community Co-ordinators, the Community Council for Somerset, Woolavington Parish Council, Woolavington Community Foundation, SHAL Housing, Woolavington Playing Field Association, and the Little Nippers Playgroup.

The following have also expressed an interest in taking part in the pilot project: The local Police team, Somerset Social Services, Bridgwater & Taunton College, Polden Medical Practice, Navigate CIO (Debt Support), The Centre for Sustainable Energy (Energy Support), The Citizens Advice Somerset, Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) Disability Advisory Service.

Overall estimated costs to March 2026

Priority 1: Community HUB/Social Centre	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Bitham Walk Hall Community Hub 'Pilot' Lease / operating costs	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000		£80,000
Spoke and Hub Activities – Puriton	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000		£20,000
Priority 1 Total	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000		£100,000

Priority 2: More Activities for Young People

The survey and Local Insight data highlighted the need for a range of activities to support young people. One of the most significant findings from a scrutiny of the Local Insight data is the number of children in our area live in 'absolute low-income families', which at 14.3% is higher than the South West average of 11.7%.

Priority 2: Project 1. Woolavington Sports Field Drainage

Need – Through a large capital grant in our last plan, Villages Together enabled the acquisition of the 'Top' Sports Field at Crancombe Lane by the Woolavington Community Foundation CIO. However, the field is currently deemed unfit for purpose (particularly in the winter months) due to poor drainage, which leaves large areas of the field water-logged. This is particularly hazardous and presents health and safety issues for sports teams, such as the newly formed Woolavington Wanderers youth Football Club, who – as a result – are unable to use the field.

Addressing the drainage issues of the field, so that it is suitable for use to promote physical activity and fitness, would help unlock and deliver a number of other opportunities and activities that would benefit young people.

Objectives & Outcomes – this project would help us to meet Big Local outcomes 2 & 4.

Project ideas – To support the Woolavington Community Foundation CIO to install a new drainage system, utilising the existing main carrier drain.

Works required to install new drainage system:

1. Install a new drain parallel to the base of the bank along the field side (to intercept water, both surface and sub surface from the higher fields).
2. Install plastic perforated drainage laterals at 5-metre centres to run the full width of the field.
3. To install a field carrier, drain to connect the laterals to the existing main carrier drain.
4. To import clean stone, PM35 or similar grade sports sand and ameliorate into the top 120 mm of topsoil or high sand content topsoil (if required).
5. To make good surface levels and initial seed.

Partners – Woolavington Community Foundation CIO, Woolavington Parish Council, Woolavington Wanderers Football Club, and the Woolavington Hub Task & Finish Group.

Priority 2: Project 2. Inspired Schools Young People's Provision

Providing free access to physical activity and a hot meal each day during the May, October, and February Half-Terms – 20 places each day for VT School Children.

Need – During the bigger holiday periods during the academic year, namely Easter, Summer, and Christmas Inspired Schools currently delivers the Healthy Activity and Food (HAF) programme across ten venues in Somerset. Over Easter 2023, they had 1,167-day bookings and in addition we (Villages Together) provided an additional 20 places per day, of which 19 were filled.

This indicates that there is a need for funded places for the children of Woolavington and Puriton to access physical activity, and a hot meal each day.

Woolavington Village Primary School is one of Inspired Schools HAF Camp venues, and they usually get between 20 and 30 places, which are always filled, further indicating the need for provision.

Further, the funding they access from the Government is only for the bigger school holidays – as outlined – and the additional provision proposed is for October, February, and May Half-Terms, to tackle the inactivity crisis that has worsened post the Covid 19 pandemic.

Project details – 20 Children per day @ £35 per day, food included.

October Half Term (5 days) = £3,500. February (5 days) = £3,500. May (4 days) = £2,800.

Total per year = £9,800 / Total across two years = £19,600.

Inspired Schools will run a varied and exciting timetable to ensure all children are catered for. Within the timetable there will be slots for children to select or choose activities. Activities include mainstream sports such as football, dodgeball, gymnastics, basketball – but also teambuilding, wellbeing workshops, resilience, and fair play sessions.

An experienced staff team – who are all fully qualified, employed, and DBS checked – will facilitate the delivery of the camps. Further, Inspired Schools aim to place the coaches that are already working with the children at their schools at the camp, so there are familiar faces there for them.

Inspired Schools' insurance fully covers their staff in all eventualities at the camp, and their team take all the necessary information from parents, first aid requirements, photo consent, and everything they need to fully safeguard the holiday camp.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- Physical activity;
- Hot and healthy meal each day;
- Childcare if parents need to work;
- A safe place for children that might be at risk at home;
- A consistent role model from Inspired Schools' coaching team that the children can rely on;
- A regular presence for the community, one that they trust and can rely on to provide a high quality and safe environment;
- Building on friendships, creating new ones;
- Improve communication skills;
- Develop teamwork and resilience;

Quality assurance checks:

- Inspired Schools' core team will complete monitoring visits; meeting post camp as a team.
- They send every parent a feedback questionnaire for them to rate the camp, including: Food, Facility, Staff – and also give parents the opportunity to review and give opinions on the provision. To support the returning off the feedback forms, Inspired Schools offer a 'free camp' draw (if they are received by a certain date). The winners are drawn from the received application.
- Inspired Schools interview children, staff, and parents to highlight quality of provision and areas they need to continue to improve.

The Provider – Inspired School's aim is to see More Children, More Active, More Often through a number of projects.

This Inspired Schools' project sees the organisation working with over 40 Somerset Primary schools, working with in excess of 6,000 children per week. Their project encompasses PE lessons, extra curricular clubs, mentoring, teacher CPD, 'Early Active' clubs, and Forest School Activities.

The organisation's Inspired Playgrounds project works with over 150 Primary and Special Schools nationally, implementing an Inspired Playground project – which focuses on raising activity levels, giving teachers a practical resource for classroom breaks, exercise boosts, extra-curricular clubs, focus groups, and break and lunchtime alternatives. The project encompasses a training package to support the development of a 'Sports Leaders' group made up of children and teacher CPD. Their Inspired Community project involves running holiday camps and specifically HHH provision through the school holiday period. The weekly HAF clubs at Lyngford Park Primary School and Northgate Primary School in Bridgwater offer Pupil Premium children the opportunity to attend a fantastic environment and the chance to get involved with a varied and diverse timetable of activities.

"We are an organisation that are very proud to be involved with the project and are totally committed to providing the best possible settings we can ensure a fantastic experience for all who attend."

Ben Kirk, Co-founder and Director of Inspired Schools and Inspired Somerset

Overall estimated costs to March 2026

Priority 2: More Activities for Young People	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Woolavington Sports Field Drainage	90,000						£90,000
Inspired Schools	6,300	3,500	6,300	3,500			£19,600
Priority 2 Total	96,300	3,500	6,300	3,500			£109,600

Priority 3: Improving Public/Community Transport

Need – During our consultation, a very popular and emotive issue was the lack of transport. Although there is a bus service in the villages during the day, it is not very regular, and the evening and weekend services are very poor.

Due to the busy main road that runs between Puriton and Woolavington, events and activities that run in Puriton are almost inaccessible for those living in Woolavington and vice versa without a car. Similarly, many of our community members are older and no longer drive or feel confident to drive. The area also has many steep hills.

Although there is a well-used community transport scheme in Woolavington, it is solely dependent on volunteer drivers and their permitted parameters for use are restricted largely to medical purposes and is not available to residents in Puriton.

Objectives & Outcomes – To learn from the existing community transport scheme in Woolavington and investigate how Villages Together can support them. To research and learn from transport solutions locally, including the very successful 'Wivey Link' project in Wiveliscombe, and within the Big Local community. To form a Task and Finish Group to test project ideas, including private sector services.

Project ideas – Woolavington Wanderers FC trustees have expressed their interest to help run a community transport project and develop a team of volunteers that will assist with the driving of the vehicle(s).

The PCSO has used transport in the past to take identified vulnerable young people on days out. Puriton and Woolavington Churches are part of the Link Benefice – which also includes Bawdrip, Cossington, Pawlett. Services are held at each of these churches on different Sundays, and the church could benefit from being able to offer divers and transport to its congregation.

Polden Medical Practice in Woolavington could offer transport to get people to appointments?

Our long-term aim is to have a community transport system that key stakeholders can use.

Partners – in addition to Woolavington Wanderers FC, potential partners include Woolavington Village Wheels, the churches, schools, toddler groups, our local Police team.

Overall estimated costs to March 2026

Priority 3: Improving Public/Community Transport	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Minibus – lease and operating costs	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000		£50,000
Priority 3 Total	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000		£50,000

Priority 4: Making Villages Together happen

Need – Employing staff is vital to facilitate the delivery of our programme. We will continue to enable our board, including new members, to work together as a ‘team’. We are keen to resource ‘away-days’ and support training for all members.

Objectives & Outcomes – To ensure Villages Together has sufficient staff time to implement the programme; oversee and facilitate the close of the programme and maximise resident and partner involvement – supporting all four Big Local outcomes.

To maximise the impact of our programme. To communicate effectively with the community. To support review of our projects and programme.

Project ideas

- Continue to employ our community project worker and administrator.
- Partnership development and assessment training.
- Communication and publicity.

Overall estimated costs to March 2026

Priority 4: Making Big Local Happen	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Staff Wages	30,500	30,500	30,500	30,500	16,400		£138,400
Professional Fees	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,000	1,000		£8,000
Core Costs	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,000	1,000	£8,000
Priority 4 Total	34,000	34,000	34,000	33,000	18,400	1,000	£154,400

All Priorities – Community Grant Funding

We have decided to continue with our popular small Community Grant scheme for any charity or not-for-profit community group or organisation that delivers activities or opportunities in Woolavington and/or Puriton – and meets our Community Grants Funding Criteria.

Our Community Grant is a straightforward small grants scheme, which promotes Villages Together and encourages people to get involved with our Big Local programme.

Community groups or organisations can apply for up-to £500 to support their delivery against the Villages Together Big Local Plan. Applications will be considered and determined by the Villages Together Partnership committee and the Local Trusted Organisation – SHAL Housing. We will ensure our grant funds applicants also seek match funding, whenever possible.

Overall estimated costs to March 2026

Priorities 1-4. Community Grants	July 2023	Jan 2024	July 2024	Jan 2025	July 2025	Jan 2026	Total
Up to £500 Community Grants Scheme	3,000		3,000				£6,000
Grants Total	3,000		3,000				£6,000

6. Delivering our priorities

Our approach to delivery

Through the preparation of our plan, we have discussed the principles behind its delivery.

- Building local capacity – encouraging local residents to get involved, form self-help groups (such as walking groups), engage with local organisations – will be fundamental to our way of working.
- Working with partners is crucial to our delivery arrangements. In this way, we consider we can maximise our impact and visibility. Where possible, we aim to combine resources to make the most of what we have.
- Making the most of what already exists – through signposting and helping to access.
- Helping to kick-start or enhance projects that can become sustainable.
- Encouraging own fundraising to match fund and stretch our resources.

With our Community Hub/Social Centre and Spoke project, we have changed our approach and decided to undertake our own, pro-active project. Becoming directly responsible for helping to deliver our priorities and ensure we're able to implement our plan.

Milestones

We have learnt the importance of milestones and keep projects to time and budget. We recognise there is no extension to this plan and we will have to make strategic decisions throughout the next two years, particularly if timelines are slipping. Therefore we have agreed the following key milestones for each.

Project	Complete by
Community Hub/Social Centre with Community Spoke	
Business Plan	August 2023
Stakeholder group established	September 2023
Lease/ownership finalised for future	March 2024
Legacy organisation identified	March 2024
Business Plan for future use created	October 2024
More Activities for Young People – Sports Field Drainage	
Procurement – Tender Documents produced for Quotes	July 2023
Quotes received	October 2023
Decision by VT re: feasibility and affordability	November 2023
If YES, works begin	April 2024
More Activities for Young People – Inspired Schools	
Review – evaluate and decide if funding continues?	November 2023
Improving Public/Community Transport	
Set up Transport Task and Finish Group	June 2023
Research, visit other schemes	August 2023
Outline proposal/scheme	October 2023
Decision by VT re: feasibility and affordability	November 2023
If YES, works project(s)	January 2024

If any of our investigations lead to the nominated projects being undeliverable or unaffordable, we will go to our list of Plan B projects (see Appendix 2), which are ready to go, deliverable and achievable, despite not being clearly prioritised for our plan. Although, they do contribute to the VT legacy and the priorities of previous plans that have been consistent throughout the Big Local programme – improving communities facilities and young people.

Working in Partnership

Partners are key to delivery in our Big Local area. We aim to build on the links we have made to date – with Gravity, schools, the parish councils, and others – to maximise our impact, either by delivering projects together or by supporting them to deliver what they do best.

Delivering Big Local – Staffing

We realise that our staff resource is crucial to delivering our plan. We have reviewed our workers' roles and job descriptions, and have budgeted accordingly.

Reviewing – Measuring & Evaluating Outcomes

At the outset of any projects we support, we will consider how they will be monitored, including the contribution of any of our partners. We will be explicit about our expectations of the grant and we will investigate taking up the Local Trust 'Measuring Change' offer. We want to be able to feedback to the community regularly – demonstrating our impacts and the value of us all working together.

We will review our plan every year – to check our progress, our spend, and how well we are addressing our priorities and the four Big Local outcomes.

We will continue to learn by considering all the monitoring information. We will adjust and amend projects and will be bold enough to stop projects if they are not progressing as planned, or in a meaningful way for our community.

We will share what we learn and what progress we make with our community and partners.

APPENDIX 1 – VILLAGES TOGETHER ACTION PLAN – OUR PLAN ON A PAGE.

Priority One – Community Hub

Priority One	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
Community Hub/Social Centre with Café + Spoke	Villages Together Partnership	£	£	£	£	£	£	£100,000
Bitham Walk Hall Community Hub 'Pilot'. Lease and operating costs	Villages Together Partnership + Hub 'Task & Finish Group'	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000		£80,000
Spoke and Hub Activities – Puriton	Villages Together Partnership + Hub 'Task & Finish Group'	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000		£20,000
TOTALS		<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£20,000</u>		<u>£100,000</u>

Priority Two – Activities for Young People

Priority Two	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
More Activities for Young People	Villages Together Partnership	£	£	£	£	£	£	£109,600
Woolavington Sports Field Drainage	Woolavington Community Foundation CIO	£90,000						£90,000
Inspired Schools Half-Term Provision.	Villages Together Partnership	£6,300	£3,500	£6,300	£3,500			£19,600
TOTALS		<u>£96,300</u>	<u>£3,500</u>	<u>£6,300</u>	<u>£3,500</u>			<u>£109,600</u>

Priority Three – Transport

Priority Three	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
Improving Public / Community Transport	Villages Together Partnership	£	£	£	£	£	£	£50,000
Minibus – lease & operating costs	Villages Together Partnership	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000		£50,000
TOTALS		<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>		<u>£50,000</u>

Priority Four – Making Big Local Happen

Priority Three	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
Making Big Local Happen	Villages Together Partnership	£	£	£	£	£	£	£154,400
Staff Wages	Villages Together Partnership	£30,500	£30,500	£30,500	£30,500	£16,400		£138,400
Professional Fees	Villages Together Partnership	£2,000	£2,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£8,000
Core Costs	Villages Together Partnership + SHAL Housing LTO	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,000	£1,000	£8,000
TOTALS		<u>£34,000</u>	<u>£34,000</u>	<u>£33,000</u>	<u>£33,000</u>	<u>£18,400</u>	<u>£2,000</u>	<u>£154,400</u>

Across All Priorities – Community Grant Scheme

All Priorities	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
Up to £500 Community Grants Scheme	Villages Together Partnership	£	£	£	£	£	£	£6,000
Community Grants	Villages Together Partnership	£3,000		£3,000				£6,000
TOTALS		<u>£3,000</u>		<u>£3,000</u>				<u>£6,000</u>

COMBINED PLAN TOTALS

Priority	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
P1. Community Hub	£ 20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£ 0	£100,000
P2. Activities for Young People	£ 96,300	£ 3,500	£ 6,300	£ 3,500	£ 0	£ 0	£109,600
P3. Transport	£ 10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£ 0	£ 50,000
P4. Making Big Local Happen	£ 34,000	£34,000	£33,000	£33,000	£18,400	£ 2,000	£154,400
All Ps. Community Grants	<u>£ 3,000</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 3,000</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 6,000</u>
Plan Total	<u>£163,300</u>	<u>£67,500</u>	<u>£72,300</u>	<u>£66,500</u>	<u>£48,400</u>	<u>£ 2,000</u>	<u>£420,000</u>

APPENDIX 2 – VILLAGES TOGETHER ACTION PLAN – PLAN B PROJECTS.

These were projects proposed to the Partnership that Villages Together could not fund within the budgets of our Final Plan. However, if the opportunity arose – for whatever reason – then our Partnership would be happy to reconsider funding them.

Priority Two – Activities for Young People

Priority Two	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
More Activities for Young People		£	£	£	£	£	£	£38,000
Zip Wire Puriton Sports Centre	Puriton Parish Council + Puriton Sports Centre CIO	£20,000						£20,000
Youth Boxing Gym – Woolavington Pavilion	Woolavington Community Foundation CIO + Woolavington Wanderers FC		£18,000					£18,000
TOTALS		<u>£20,000</u>	<u>£18,000</u>					<u>£38,000</u>

Other Projects – Not in Priorities

Not in Priorities	Lead	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
Other Projects		£	£	£	£	£	£	£50,000
Woolavington Village Hall Decarbonisation	Woolavington Village Hall Trustees	£40,000						£40,000
Gravity Pathway – Benches and Information Boards	Villages Together Partnership with Parish Councils and This is Gravity		£10,000					£10,000
TOTALS		<u>£40,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>					<u>£50,000</u>

COMBINED PLAN TOTALS

Priority	July 23	Jan 24	July 24	Jan 25	July 25	Jan 26	Total
P2. Activities for Young People	£20,000	£18,000	£ 0	£ 0	£ 0	£ 0	£38,000
Not in Ps. Other Projects	<u>£40,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£50,000</u>
Plan Total	<u>£60,000</u>	<u>£28,000</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£ 0</u>	<u>£88,000</u>