



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

### ASSET TRANSFER

South Tyneside Council

## Libraries re-write their future

The future of four branch libraries in South Tyneside now look much brighter following their transfer to community groups and charities.

One of the hardest hit local authorities as a result of cuts in central government funding, South Tyneside Council had to look at new ways of delivering services for residents.

Rather than simply closedown branch libraries, it asked for the support of its local communities. All four branch libraries have now been safeguarded with community groups or charities taking over the running of them.

Primrose Library is now run by Perth Green Community Association, local charity Boldon and Cleadon Community Library has taken over the management of East Boldon Library, the Friends of Whitburn Library is running Whitburn Library and Action Station South Tyneside has taken over the management of Boldon Lane Library.

In all cases, the moves have led to even better outcomes for residents with extended opening hours and, in some cases, better resources such as computers. All the groups have plans to extend use of the libraries to include social, cultural or educational activities to enhance their community value.

The transfer of assets has allowed the Council to safeguard valued community assets for future generations. This would not have been possible without the strong community spirit so prevalent in South Tyneside as well as a vibrant third sector.

By putting co-production at the heart of its strategy, the Council has enabled residents to take greater ownerships of projects.

The Council has invested in a Third Sector Strategy and has invested in a funding portal to allow community groups to bid for external funding. As part of the asset transfer programme, the Council is giving residents the tools they need to empower themselves and develop the assets they now run.

In the increasingly complex environment in which local authorities now operate, it is more vital than ever to take a more collaborative approach with residents. By developing a new social contract with our communities, local authorities can make co-operative working the new norm. As this case study demonstrates – it is an approach that works.

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