AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Democratic Services

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24 October, 2013

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee will be held at **6.30 pm on 6 November, 2013,** in **The Olympic Room at The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury,** when your attendance is requested.

Membership: Councillor Hunter- Watts (Chairman); Councillors Adams, Mrs Bloom, Bond, Mrs Brandis, Cashman, Mrs Chapple, Fealey (Vice Chairman), Foster, Mrs Russel, Mrs L Smith, Stuchbury, Mrs Takodra, Vick and Winn

Contact Officer: Craig Saunders (01296) 585043.

L White
Head of Administration
Members:

> Ms Pam Bibby, Mr Derek Willmer, Committee Clerk (Generic Author), Web Master (IT), Cllr Chris Adams, Cllr Ashley Bond, Cllr Jenny Bloom, Cllr Judy Brandis, Cllr Corry Cashman, Cllr Sue Chapple, Cllr Brian Foster, Cllr Patrick Fealey, Cllr Paul Hughes, Cllr Tom Hunter-Watts, Cllr Barbara Russel, Cllr Lisa Smith, Cllr Robin Stuchbury, Cllr David Vick, Cllr Mark Winn, Miss Alice Fisher, Mr Bill Ashton, Ms Bryony Roberts (Audit), Mr Craig Saunders, Mr David Lamb (Audit), Mr Douglas Gray (Audit), Mr Les White,

AGENDA

1   **APOLOGIES**

2   **TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**

     Any changes to be reported to the meeting.

3   **MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2013, copy attached as Appendix A.
Documents Attached:

📄 environment and living minutes 18 09 2013.pdf

4   **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members to declare any interests.

5   **PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING SAFETY**

To consider the report attached as Appendix B coloured green.

Contact Officer: Stephanie Moffat (01296) 585295
Documents Attached:

📄 App B - cycle and pedestrian safety report.pdf

6   **DRAFT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2014-2017**

To consider the report attached as Appendix C coloured white.

Contact Officer: Khyati Vaughan (01296) 585881
Documents Attached:

📄 App C - Housing and homelessness strategy report.pdf

7   **AYLESBURY VALE COMMUNITY COHESION AND INTEGRATION STRATEGY - PROGRESS REPORT**

To consider the report attached as Appendix D coloured pink.

Contact Officer: Stephanie Moffat (01296) 585295
Documents Attached:

📄 App D - cp-ccu-els.pdf

8   **ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2013-2014**

To note the current Work Programme attached as Appendix E coloured blue and to:

(i) Discuss and agree the future work programme.

(ii) Consider questions and other matters relating to items to be considered at the next meeting on 16 December 2013, in particular relating to:-

- Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust - performance of the housing stock over the past 12 months.
  - Thames Valley Police - crime and disorder, and community safety

Contact Officer: Craig Saunders (01296) 585043
Documents Attached:

App E - ELSC Work Programme (November 2013 meeting).pdf

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 September 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Hunter-Watts (Chairman); Councillors Adams, Mrs Bloom, Bond, Mrs Chapple, Foster, Mrs Russel, Mrs L Smith, Stuchbury, Mrs Takodra and Winn. Councillors Mrs Paternoster and Mrs Polhill attended also.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mrs Brandis, Cashman, Fealey, Sir Beville Stanier and Vick.

1. **MINUTES**

   RESOLVED –

   That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2013 be approved as a correct record.

2. **FARMING AND WILDLIFE**

   The Committee received a report which provided Members with an overview of legislation, policy and research relating to farming and wildlife. It also set out Leisure Services response to the main duties, issues and opportunities.

   The varied geology and topography of Aylesbury Vale created a countryside rich in landscape and wildlife. Many of the habitats and species were of national and international importance. The essentially rural nature of the district with its mix of arable and livestock management means that the major opportunities to benefit wildlife were on farmland.

   Threats to farmland wildlife were many and varied, leading to habitat and species losses and a decline in the quality and value of what remained. Threats arose from changes in farming practices, climate change, loss of land and habitat fragmentation due to major infrastructure and new housing and commercial developments.

   Three main pieces of legislation related to farming and wildlife and the role that local authorities have to play. The main one was the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, relating to nature conservation, which was supplemented by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The 1992 European Habitats Directive placed a duty on local authorities to have regard to biodiversity in the exercise of their functions to the requirements of the Directive, which was reiterated in the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

   The 2010 Lawton Report 'Making Space for Nature' was the main document commissioned by the government on biodiversity and had been used to inform the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper and the 2012 'Biodiversity 2020'. It stressed that 'natural capital' was as vital to current and future prosperity as economic and social capital and that nature was fundamental to our wellbeing, health and economy. Recommendations which related to local authorities and their work relating to farming and wildlife were:
   - ensure ecological networks are identified and protected through Planning.
   - ensure Planning policy should continue to protect important sites.
   - identify ecological restoration zones for landscape-scale conservation.
   - take greater steps to reconnect people and nature.
   - take responsibility for the identification and monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites.

The 2011 Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) outlined policy to mainstream the value of nature across society. It included the establishment of Local Nature Partnerships and stated that protection and improvement of the natural environment must be a core objective of the Planning system.

The DEFRA 2012 'Biodiversity 2020' report was a significant policy document as it drew together the Lawton Report and the White Paper. It set out a national framework to halt the overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020 and to move from net biodiversity loss to gain. The key actions included:
- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation.
- Putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy.
- Reducing environmental pressures.
- Improving knowledge.
- Valuing what nature does for us.

The 2012 National Planning Policy Framework stated that the Planning system had an environmental role by contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural environment and helping to improve biodiversity and should facilitate to achieving net gains for nature. It set out the role that local planning authorities should play in this regard and covered development impacting upon farmland and its wildlife. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the principles that if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. The NPPF states that the environment must be considered alongside community and economic matters.

Whilst policies designed to protect and enhance biodiversity were important and necessary, there were concerns about the policy to encourage development on poorer areas of land in terms of agricultural productivity as this could often be the richest in wildlife. The protection of important sites for wildlife on farmland was therefore vital.

The 2013 State of Nature report by leading wildlife organisations had concluded that the UK's nature was in trouble and that 60% of species had declined over recent decades, with 10% under threat of disappearing altogether.

2013 DEFRA agri-environment advice report set out how they intended to change the provision of advice and help farmers produce more food whilst continuing to protect the environment. It recognised commitments within the White Paper and Biodiversity 2020 to biodiversity protection and enhancement. The key themes which have come out from this review of legislation, policy and research and which relate to farming and wildlife were:
- AVDC has a legislative duty to have regard to biodiversity.
- The economic importance of ecosystem wellbeing in agricultural practices needs to be better understood e.g. pollinating insects.
- Farming must remain viable whilst supporting and enhancing biodiversity.
- The government was reducing the advice provided to farmers on agri-environment issues with a movement towards more local advice.
- Planning must take account of biodiversity and aim for a net gain.
- An urgent need for habitat creation and targeted species conservation.
- Greater local action needs to be supported through community involvement in conservation, awareness raising and skills development.

- New initiatives such as biodiversity offsetting and the ecosystem services approach recognise the full value of the natural environment and may offer new income streams.
- Conservation action needs to be evidence-based, be at landscape scale and be able to respond to the changing climate.

Leisure Services had grouped their responses under the 5 action areas identified in Biodiversity 2020 and examples given of delivery:-
- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation
- Putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy
- Reducing environmental pressures
- Improving knowledge
- Valuing what nature does for us

The review demonstrates that AVDC's Leisure Services made a significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of farmland wildlife and supported farmers to be able to benefit wildlife as part of a commercially sound business. It achieves this by:
- Providing ecological advice to farmers on habitat creation and management
- Building volunteer networks and organising farmland wildlife surveys
- Species specific conservation schemes – barn owls, water voles, otters
- Securing inward investment for farmers through grants
- Influencing and negotiation of Leisure outcomes as part of the Planning process
- Negotiating ecological mitigation of new developments and major infrastructure
- Leading role in the establishment of the new Natural Environment Partnership
- Training and skills development
- Partnership working e.g. RSPB, Hawk and Owl Trust, Bat Conservation Trust

However, the work carried out by Leisure Services in regard to farming and wildlife had to be set in the context of the New Business Model and the need for the Council to reduce costs. Whilst external grants have facilitated schemes such as the North Bucks Bat Group and the Barn Owl Project, ways to reduce the core costs of Leisure Services had to be identified. Work was currently underway to seek ways to reduce costs and increase income, which might require changes to be made to the current services provided.

The report went on to provide an overview of Leisure Services' role in farming and wildlife and to explain how the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) had been formed in 2013 with a dual aim of bringing together the green infrastructure and biodiversity sectors, and to assist in partnership working between agriculture, health, education, business, community and voluntary sectors.

A Shadow Board had been appointed which included Members from each local authority, and representatives from Natural England, the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, the Chilterns Conservation Board, the education sector, the health sector, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Buckinghamshire Business First. Leisure Services played a leading role in the NEP, represented on the Board by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and the Leisure Services Manager chairs the Delivery Group.

The Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy set the framework for the creation and management of green infrastructure (GI). The first part set out the principles for the creation and management of GI which included ensuring that development resulted in a net gain in biodiversity and that existing woodlands should be enhanced and new woodlands created. These principles governed the way in which farmland identified for development should be considered e.g. retention of important hedgerows as green

corridors. The flagship projects included Bernwood Forest and the Regional Wetlands Park (to be created as part of the Aylesbury East development) all of which would involve farmed landscapes.

AVDC's Biodiversity team was also involved in a significant amount of project and partnership work across the District, including with the Bucks Owl and Raptor Group and relating to threatened tree species such as the Ash. The team had also helped to establish biodiversity volunteer networks for ecological recording and practical conservation, much of which was carried out on farmland. These volunteers gave over 3000 days each year to projects such as Vale Countryside Volunteers, the North Bucks Bat Group, and the Otter and Water Vole project. The Biodiversity team reported annually on this work to the scrutiny committee.

This biodiversity volunteering was also helping to deliver the health and well-being agenda as it offered great physical and mental health benefits.

Biodiversity 2020 set out how to reduce environmental pressures under 4 categories: agriculture, forestry, planning and development, and water management. Some of the initiatives undertaken in the District under these 4 categories were:-

Agriculture – the Biodiversity team was working with farmers in a number of ways to help them protect and enhance wildlife whilst securing food production. This included providing ecological advice, creating a network of volunteers and specialist contractors, and supporting inward investment to give monetary value to farmland conservation land.

Forestry – helping to secure grant schemes for the management and planting of woodland.

Planning and Development – Leisure Services influences the design, delivery and management of new developments to ensure that protected and important habitats and species are properly considered and mitigated for. This includes contributing to policy writing in the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, negotiation of leisure provision in new developments, negotiation of ecological mitigation schemes and commenting upon amenity landscape schemes and individual planning applications.

Water Management – AVDC works with farmers on landscape scale schemes in river corridors. This includes the River Thame and the River Great Ouse, working with farmers and the Environment Agency. The AVDC Otter Spotter and Water Vole project concentrated on the River Great Ouse to the west of Buckingham has provided advice to landowners on how best to manage the habitats for wildlife, which can have direct benefits to water quality.

The AVDC Ecological Training Programme ensured that highly skilled conservationists were consistently produced who then have the skills to maximise biodiversity benefits to the district. The Team trained volunteers, professional ecologists and landowners in a range of skills which directly benefit farmland nature conservation. This provided a vehicle for graduate ecologists to gain experience and at the same time contribute at no expense to the effectiveness of the council's biodiversity conservation efforts.

45 volunteers had been trained by AVDC officers to attain a Natural England bat license in the last 10 years, more than any other bat group in the country. The Team facilitates scientific research whose findings could then be disseminated to the national conservation movement through papers and seminars.

The Biodiversity Team had been working with Springhill Open Prison for a number of years which offered a number of benefits. Inmates from the Prison made bird boxes free of charge and in return the Biodiversity Team offered work experience to inmates, thus increasing their skills and employability. The majority of the work experience was carried out on farmland wildlife projects such as putting up barn owl boxes.

Members requested further information and were informed:-

(i)   that the Council's Biodiversity team continued to work closely with landowners to protect species including water voles, otters and Barn Owls, and their habitats. This also included creating wildflower meadows and hedgerows. Biodiversity volunteers made a significant contribution to this work..

(ii)   that, where possible, AVDC highlighted for landowners where they might obtain funding for works to benefit wildlife such as improving hedgerows. AVDC had assisted farmers in securing grants such as DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship and had helped farmers to plant over 20 kilometres of hedgerows in the last 10 years through its volunteer groups.

(iii)   that the Council had developed a new technique with a local farmer for laying hedgerows, which was better for wildlife, quicker and cheaper. The technique had been recognised by DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship scheme and the Team are working with farmers to further develop and assess the technique so it can inform national best practice.

(iv)   that DEFRA and Natural England both issued Regulations and guidelines of good practice for hedge management to improve the conservation value of different types of hedges.

(v)   that some lottery funding was still available for biodiversity schemes and the Team will continue to develop ideas for species conservation funded through grants

(vi)   AVDC had been instrumental in setting up the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environmental Partnership (NEP) and it was possible that funding could be obtained in the future for setting up the government's objective of establishing landscape scale 'nature improvement areas' .

(vii)   The Team already worked on landscape scale initiatives including the Thame Valley and Great Ouse Valley, the latter being where the Otter and Water Vole conservation project was underway.

(viii) that the Council's Green Spaces team also played an important role in influencing the planning process to ensure that the design, delivery and management of new developments ensured that protected and important habitats and species were properly considered and mitigated for. A prime example was this would be the inclusion of a new 100 hectare nature reserve within the proposed developed to the south east of Aylesbury.

(ix)   The Team has secured national recognition for its work on biodiversity and planning, coordinating conservation effort on the rare black poplar tree and for the achievements of the North Bucks Bat Group.

RESOLVED –

(1)   That Officers be thanked for the comprehensive and interesting report to the Committee.

(2)   That the work being done on biodiversity and green infrastructure by the Council, which in turn supported farming and wildlife in the Vale, be noted.

(3)   That Members would consider an offer for the Biodiversity Team to organise site visits to see the work of the Team with farmers.

(4)   That greater publicity be sought for the work of the Team, including articles in the Aylesbury Vale Times.

3.   AUDIT OF LEISURE FACILITIES

An audit of Aylesbury Vale's leisure and cultural provision had been carried out in 2012/13 and followed previous assessments of leisure and cultural provision in the Vale based around the Planning Policy Guidance (now National Planning Policy Framework) requirements.

The audit covered a wide range of built and green leisure provision, including indoor and outdoor sports, arts and entertainment centres, community buildings and green spaces. For the first time, the audit had also considered commercial leisure provision and existing and committed provision beyond the district boundaries.

The purpose of the Audit was to guide leisure and cultural provision across the Vale, and in particular to inform provision associated with new housing growth. It took account of the forecast housing growth associated with the Vale of Aylesbury Plan and provided guidance on the gaps in current provision and what would be required based on the forecast growth. Similarly it would serve to inform parish and town councils who were considering their leisure and cultural provision and wish to understand identified gaps in provision.

The Council recognised that a high quality and diverse leisure offer contributed to the economic growth of the Vale, the physical and mental health and well-being of residents and visitors and to delivering sustainable growth.

The Audit report included a summary of nationally recommended standards (Appendix 1). Where suitable the national standards had been applied to assess the current and future need, including Sport England for sports facilities and Natural England for green infrastructure. The standards form the basis for provision on site or off site through financial contributions elsewhere in the Vale. Creating a schedule of leisure and cultural standards enabled developers to take into account the leisure and cultural provision required at the earliest opportunity of their planning delivery, including their viability assessments.

Whilst a wide range of leisure provision had been considered, the audit could not realistically capture all that the Vale had to offer, and did not cover high quality and diverse leisure and cultural interests which reflected heritage and landscape such as National Trust properties, equestrian centres and museums.

Similarly the audit did not capture the huge range of leisure and cultural activities on offer, which included AVDC's leisure programme, town centre events organised by the Aylesbury Town Partnership, town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector.

The main findings of the audit were as follows:-

- that there were some gaps in provision in the Aylesbury area – 6 badminton courts, a synthetic turf pitch and 8 outdoor tennis courts.

- that there were some gaps in provision in the Buckingham area – a community centre, 3 grass pitches and 3 outdoor tennis courts.

- there was a need for improved management of existing facilities for some categories sports, such as swimming pools, entertainment and arts facilities, outdoor bowls and athletics

- the provision of some facilities such as cinemas, snow centre, ice rink and bowling alleys would be commercial decisions, based for instance on drive time catchments.

- that the provision of some sports facilities such as cricket pitches was more closely linked to the tradition of rural communities, than a fixed standard.

- standards were not set for heritage interpretation or public art but these should be sought as integral parts of the design of new developments.

The information and conclusions regarding additional commercial facilities had also been fed into the draft improvement plan for Aylesbury Town Centre.

Members requested further information and were informed:-

(i)   that having recommended Standards in place made it clear to developers of the Council's expectations for leisure provision for new developments, and also assisted the Council with negotiating with these developers.

(ii)   that Aylesbury Vale had a deficit of green space areas, even for a rural area. However, the position had improved considerably in recent years since the Green Infrastructure Partnership and Strategy had been put in place and with new housing developments..

(iii)   that the Quarrendon Scheduled Ancient Monument was included in the Green Infrastructure Strategy as an important site but as there was only limited public access to this site at the time of the audit, it was not included within the calculations of publicly accessible green space..

(iv)   on the current position regarding the provision of leisure facilities for new developments in the Buckingham area.

(v)   that where suitable standard had been applied to assess the current and future leisure needs, including Sport England for sports facilities and Natural England for green infrastructure. These standards contained both quantitative and qualitative elements.

(vi)   that Leisure Services had also been looking at examples of best practice in leisure provision in other places,

(vii)   that Leisure Services were working with the AVDC Marketing and Communications, to improve local leisure offerings and make Aylesbury a more attractive place for people to live, and to visit through the production of the town improvement plan.

(viii) Leisure Services led on the tourism work for AVDC and across the county to ensure that Aylesbury Vale was promoted as a visitor destination.

(ix)   that Wheelpower had developed a 10 year plan to develop the Stoke Mandeville Stadium, which the committee might wish to hear about at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

(1)   That the findings of the leisure audit 2012/13 be noted.

(2)   That the scrutiny committee was fully supportive of efforts being made by AVDC and its Officers to improve the provision of leisure facilities across Aylesbury Vale.

(3)   That Members consider the offer of site visits to see the leisure and cultural facilities in the Vale

4.   VALE OF AYLESBURY PLAN (VAP) – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The Committee had received a report at the last meeting on the Development Management (DM) policies that were being put together as the next component of VAP. A Research Group had been established to act as a Member Sounding Board for the DM policies, and had agreed to look at 4 policy topics, namely:-

- Impact of housing policy on the ageing population, including in rural areas.

- Where the policies might help to increase health outcomes such as healthy life expectancy and the broader determinants of health.

- Relating to sustainable construction and renewable energy.

- The historic environment.

The Research Group had met twice during August 2013 to discuss these 4 topics at some length. This had included examining example policies adopted by other local authorities. As a result, the group had agreed to further research the following:-

- That minimum space standards (both internal and external) were very desirable given the problems experienced on some recent developments within the District. The group considered this would help fulfil the commitment to both improving people's health both physically and mentally.

- Strong support be given for adopting Lifetime Homes Standards in the VAP Delivery Policies document, which may help the ageing population to remain in their own homes should they develop mobility problems etc in later life.

- Need for design policies that cover issues such as car parking, materials, street lighting, bin storage, reducing street clutter, design of public buildings etc. The group considered that we should be aiming for the highest possible design standards within the District.

- We should seek to have a proactive policy for solar power generation provided that proposals do not have a detrimental impact on landscape setting and other constraints. We should consider producing a design standard/guidance note for this, i.e. panels should be height adjustable to enable grazing beneath.

- We need additional policies for dealing with the historic environment and not rely solely on the NPPF. We should also seek to protect non-listed heritage assets together with buildings/places that are local 'landmarks'.

The Research Group was of the view that these DM policies meetings had been a very useful exercise. As such, it was intended that these joint meetings with Members and Officers would continue as further DM policies were developed.

Since the last Research Group meeting, the Government had published a consultation document looking at housing standards nationwide, which would run until November 2013. Officers would be responding to this consultation in the normal manner.

However, an initial assessment suggested that this guidance might significantly constrain what the Council might require in future by way of planning policy.

Members requested further information and were informed:-

(i)   that the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan contained a policy relating to the sale of the last pub in a village, that Members might wish to take forward, and strengthen, in the Vale of Aylesbury Plan.

(ii)   that communities could use the Community Right to Bid to 'pause' the sale of buildings or land they cared about such as a local pub, shop, library or football pitch. This would give the community time to develop a bid to buy it. However, it was important to nominate land and buildings to be part of a register of 'assets of community value'. If something on the register was then offered for sale, the community then had up to six months to prepare a bid.

(iii)   that the Government consultation was seeking views on the results of the recent review of building regulations and housing standards for England, with a possible view to rationalising the framework of building regulations, guidance, local codes and standards, and to reduce bureaucracy and costs on house builders.

Members agreed that it would be useful for the work of the Research Group to continue and to act as a Member Sounding Board for DM policies as they were developed and, it was –

RESOLVED –

That the initial work undertaken by the DM Policies Research Group be noted.

5.   SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Committee considered their future Work Programme and were informed that Officers were currently making arrangements for an item on cycling and pedestrian safety to come to the November or December 2013 meeting.

Member discussed and agreed that with effect from the next meeting the Work Programme agenda item should be split into 2 sections. Part 1 would be to agree the current Work Programme and any items to be added/deleted from the programme.

Part 2 would consider questions and any other matters relating to items on the next meeting agenda. For example, the meeting in November 2013, would consider any issues to be raised with, and questions for, the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust and the Thames Valley Police at the December 2013 meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the current position of the Work Programme and approach to be taken to considering it at future meetings be noted.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING SAFETY

1   **Purpose**

1.1   To allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider the current situation regarding cycling and pedestrian safety in the Vale.

2   **Recommendation**

2.1   Following a road safety presentation from County Council Officers, the Scrutiny Committee is requested to indicate any comments they might have, or further work that they may wish to undertake on this topic.

2   **Executive summary**

2.1   In recent years cycling has grown in popularity for both work and pleasure use. Cycling is being encouraged by the government and other agencies to emphasise the benefits in improved physical activity together with the reduction in air pollution, emissions and motor traffic congestion. Increased popularity of cycling has also been helped by the recent success of British cyclists in the London Olympics and the Tour de France. More locally, the use of cycling in tourism has also been promoted as a good way of exploring the District and beyond. For example, the Gemstone Cycle network provides nine cycle routes that have direct and safe cycle access to the town centre from residential areas in and around Aylesbury.

2.2   However, as the number of cyclists has grown, the overall safety of cyclists has been highlighted. As such, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to look at cycling and pedestrian safety as part of its future work programme.

2.3   Sue Brown and Peter Chapman from the County Council's Road Safety team (Transport for Buckinghamshire) will be attending the meeting to provide Members with information on the current local statistics regarding road safety, the road safety team's role in responding to issues and trends, and how they work with other services.

2.4   Following the Officers' presentation, Members are requested to indicate any comments they might have, or further work they may wish to undertake on this topic.

3   **Response to Key Aims and Objectives**

3.1   The Corporate Plan contains the objective of improving participation in leisure and cultural activities across the Vale.

Contact Officer   Stephanie Moffat, (01296) 585295
Background Documents   None

DRAFT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2014-2017

1   Purpose

1.1   To seek the views of Members for the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017, attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

2   Recommendations

2.1   That Members endorse the approach taken to develop the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

2.2   That Members provide comments on the draft Strategy for consideration by the Director in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Community Matters.

3   Supporting information

3.1   The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 sets out how the council aims to meet housing needs in the district. It derives from the following statutory provisions:

- **Section 8 Housing Act 1985** - duty to consider the housing conditions and housing needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation

- **Sections 1 to 3 Homelessness Act 2002** - duty to implement a homelessness strategy and to take the homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of all its functions. The duty requires a review of the housing strategy at least every five years.

3.2   Key successes from the current Strategy include the following:

- almost 2,000 new affordable homes enabled between April 2008 and March 2013

- Griffin Place (self-contained accommodation with support, to homeless households) completed

- Bearbrook Place (supported accommodation for single vulnerable homeless people) opened

- 1,156 households prevented from becoming homeless during the period April 2008 to March 2013

3.3   The current strategy is due to expire this year and a working group has been set up by council officers to work on a new strategy. The working group includes external organisations: Aylesbury Vale Homeless Action Group and Bromford Housing Group.

3.4   The new Housing and Homelessness Strategy spanning 2014-2017, has four main strategic aims:

1. Maximise the supply of affordable housing
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness
3. Maximise the use of private sector homes
4. Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

3.5 The main part of the strategy is the action plan, which sets out how we are going to achieve these aims and this will be monitored regularly by the Homelessness Prevention Group, the Director and Cabinet Member.

3.6 The draft strategy is currently going through a robust and thorough consultation process. This began in June and will end in November. It includes 3 key stages, which are:

Stage 1 – we conducted interviews with housing clients face-to-face and by phone. These clients have used a variety of services including Homelessness, Housing Advice, Bucks Home Choice, the Private Rent Scheme, drop-in services at the HUB (which is part of the Aylesbury Homeless Action Group) and residents of Griffin Place.

Stage 2 – we held a successful stakeholder event on 9th July, which included Registered Providers, voluntary groups, statutory agencies, Members, Parish Councillors, and representatives from the private sector, such as the National Landlords Association and private landlords. It was centred around a series of themed workshops which formed the four strategic aims of the strategy.

Stage 3 – we are carrying out wider public consultation on the draft strategy document, which will be published on the AVDC website for six weeks, ending on 27th November. Further actions include emailing all stakeholders, Members and Parish Councils to inform them of this consultation and issue a press release to reach the wider public.

3.7 Once the consultation responses have been evaluated and a final strategy agreed upon by the working group, the Strategy will be considered firstly by the Cabinet on 17th December, and then reported to Council on 5th February 2014 for approval. The Strategy will then be added to the Council's policy framework.

3.8 The Strategy must be completed and published early in 2014.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To ensure an agreed Housing and Homelessness Strategy is published early in 2014.

5 Resource implications

5.1 There are no additional resource requirements identified at the present time associated with the delivery of the Strategy that are not currently budgeted for.

6 Response to Key Aims and Objectives

6.1 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017 is linked to the AVDC Corporate Plan 2011-2015 within the Priority theme "Protecting and improving the living experience in the Vale".

Contact Officer   Khyati Vaughan - 01296 585881
Background Documents   Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017

Draft **Housing** and **Homelessness** Strategy

AVDC
AYLESBURY VALE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

2014-2017

Contents

October 2013.

Details correct at time
of publication.

Introduction

Key achievements for 2008-2013

- ✓ Griffin Place: Total units 105: including 24 long stay, 60 family flats, 21 single flats (completed 2008)
- ✓ Bearbrook Place: 36 bed spaces for single vulnerable homeless people (opened 2011)
- ✓ 1,997 affordable homes enabled
- ✓ 12/13 3 successful Winter Warmth schemes opened
- ✓ Bucks Home Choice implemented in 2009
- ✓ Prevented 1,156 households from becoming homeless
- ✓ Creation of the Homelessness Prevention Group
- ✓ Publication of a housing information pack for young people
- ✓ 479 households housed through the Private Rent Scheme
- ✓ Landlord Accreditation Scheme launched
- ✓ Completed 43 mortgage rescue cases

The council strives to make Aylesbury Vale the best possible place to live, work and visit. All residents should have access to a home of a good standard which they can afford and are able to sustain and maintain. The council's emerging local plan will help to address the issues around the supply of housing in the district in the long term, including the provision of new affordable housing. This strategy sets out the council's approach to meeting the housing needs of those residents who are unable to afford or access a decent home.

The strategy builds on the achievements of its predecessor and fulfils the council's duty to implement a Homelessness Strategy under Sections 1-3 of the Homelessness Act 2002. It sets out how the council will deal with continuing themes and new challenges facing the Vale through four strategic aims. The action plan identifies the key actions which will deliver those strategic aims and is therefore, the crucial part of this strategy. The involvement and support of our partners will be instrumental in delivering this plan.

The four Strategic Aims for Housing:

1. Maximise the supply of affordable housing
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness
3. Maximise the use of private sector homes
4. Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

Overview of Aylesbury Vale

Aylesbury Vale is a large district, with a resident population of 174,137 (2011 Census), a 5% (8,377 people) increase since the 2001 Census and an estimated 74,897 homes. Around 40% of the population live in the main town of Aylesbury. The other largest settlements are Buckingham, Haddenham, Wendover, and Winslow. There are a large number of smaller settlements dispersed across the rural parts of the district. The district continues to grow in terms of population and dwellings.

According to the headline results of the 2011 Census:

- 90% (156,079) of residents belonged to the White ethnic group in 2011, decreasing from 94% of the population in 2001
- 10% (18,058) of residents belong to the Non-white ethnic group in 2011, an increase of 83% since 2001
- 10% (6,862) of households had household members of different ethnic groups, a 51% increase since 2001
- 72% (50,302) of households owned their own home in 2011, either with a mortgage or loan, or outright. This is an increase of 3% since 2001, bucking the national trend (a 4% decrease)
- 28% (19,104) of households rent their home (including those living rent free), increasing by 22% from 15,662 households in 2001
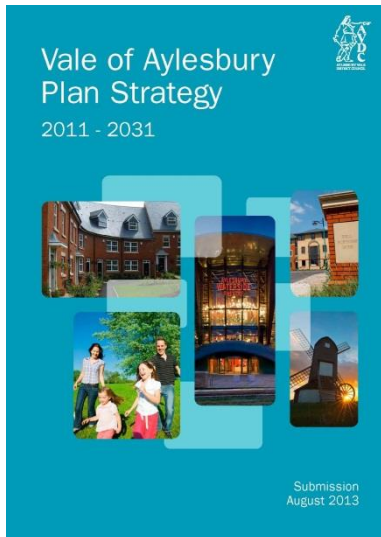
- Households who owned their own home as a percentage of the total number of households has fallen from 76% in 2001 to 72% in 2011

Policy Context

Planning

Historically Aylesbury Vale was identified as part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area in the South East Plan. The Aylesbury Vale Local Development Framework (LDF) proposed Core Strategy sought to deliver the housing numbers, including the affordable housing percentages, set out in the South East Plan. This Core Strategy was withdrawn in October 2010. The revocation of the South East Plan, the introduction of the Localism Act, and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), have all fundamentally shifted the approach that local authorities should take to planning for housing and delivering affordable housing.

The Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP) will seek to deliver the jobs and homes needed for the District for the Plan period to 2031. It will be an important role of VAP to help deliver affordable housing across the Vale.

The VAP Strategy will set out new strategic planning policies for the District. In formulating the VAP Strategy, it was necessary to consider existing provision of, and the future need for affordable housing.

Legislative changes

The introduction of the Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities new powers to discharge homelessness duties into the private sector, a new duty to introduce a Tenancy Strategy, and new flexibilities to determine housing allocations and qualification criteria. It also introduced reforms to social housing tenure which enables social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme introduced Affordable Rent, a new form of social housing and the main type of new housing supply. Housing providers can let a property at an Affordable Rent (inclusive of service charges, where applicable) of up to 80% of the gross market rent reflective of the property size and location. Affordable Rent will also be used to support funding for future delivery.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 makes the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It introduces a wide range of reforms which aim to make the benefits system simpler. The main elements of the welfare reform are:

- Universal Credit
- Benefits Cap
- Personal Independent Payment
- Council tax benefit
- Housing Benefit

Further details are on pages 14 and 15.

Strategic context

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017 is one of a number of strategies which will deliver the Aylesbury Vale District Council corporate plan 2011-2015. It will directly support a key priority for the council – Build better communities by: working with individuals to prevent homelessness; meeting targets for housing the homeless; providing an effective Bucks Home Choice service, and working with partners to provide sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of our growing communities.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy will be supported by and sit alongside the following council strategies and policies:

- Emerging Local Plan (affordable housing policies within this and associated documents)
- Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy
- Aylesbury Vale Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026
- Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy AVDC Shared Ownership Policy
- AVDC Local Lettings Policy

Consultation

This strategy has been through a robust and thorough consultation process from June to November 2013. Consultation methods used included one-to-one interviews with service users, a Homelessness Service Providers questionnaire (via the Homelessness Review), a consultation event including workshops, and public consultation.

Equality and diversity

We aim to ensure that no one faces unfair or unlawful discrimination and that all residents have fair and equal access to housing services. We will monitor this through the Equalities of the Housing Needs and Advice Service report and the Equalities Impact Assessments. We will work to remove the barriers some households face in accessing particular types of housing and provide the advice, information and support needed to make informed housing choices.

Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

Given the challenging policy and financial climate it is important to regularly review the priorities set out in this strategy, in particular the action plan, to ensure they remain current and relevant. The strategy will be reviewed by independent stakeholders and partners as part of our Homelessness Prevention Group. It will also be monitored by the service Director and Cabinet Member.

Strategic Aim 1:

Maximise the supply of affordable housing

Affordable housing, as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework document, includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market, and who cannot afford to enter the market.

We have established an excellent track record for enabling affordable housing development across the district; having helped to deliver approximately 2000 new homes over the last 5 years.

Strong working relationships with our Registered Provider partners and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) coupled with the strategic use of the AVDC housing capital programme, meant that we were able to kick start slow or stalled schemes to achieve our targets during the worst of the economic downturn.

However, the demand for decent affordable homes still remains high and delivery is now more challenging. Our capital programme is severely constrained and HCA grant is currently not available on S106 sites, which in our district supply the majority of new homes. Scheme viability is also a key factor in development and more schemes are being delivered below the 35% (as of September 2013) affordable housing planning requirement threshold.

As part of the evidence base for the development of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, AVDC commissioned a Housing and Economic Growth Assessment prepared by G L Hearn, which was published in

September 2011. Part 1 of the report outlines the need for affordable housing in 4 main housing sub-markets: Aylesbury, Rural South, Rural North and Buckingham. Taking into account the development of homes already in the pipeline the estimated annual need for affordable housing, between 2011 and 2016, is 588 units. Excluding the housing pipeline, the figure is 851 per year.

The Vale of Aylesbury Plan Strategy will be accompanied by a number of draft topic papers that provide a wider context and reasoning for the proposed policy approach. The Affordable Housing Topic Paper, dated April 2013, contains two main affordable housing policies, VS9 and VS10.

Policy VS9 Affordable housing

This sets out requirements for the provision of affordable housing or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision, on residential developments of different sizes and takes into account the viability of the development proposed and principles for negotiation. An extract of the policy is set out below:-

a) Residential developments of 15 or more dwellings gross should include at least 35% of dwellings as affordable onsite;

b) Residential developments of between 5 and 14 dwellings gross should include at least 20% of dwellings as affordable. Or where onsite provision is impractical, developments should provide a financial

contribution equivalent to 25% on-site provision to facilitate off-site provision of affordable homes;

c) Residential developments of below 5 dwellings gross should provide a financial contribution equivalent to 20% on-site provision to facilitate off-site provision of affordable homes.

Policy VS10 Affordable housing on rural exception sites

Smaller rural communities with populations of fewer than 3,000 are eligible for Rural Exception Site (RES) status, in which planning restrictions can be waived to meet the need for affordable housing in the local community. This policy provides for small-scale developments of affordable housing to meet identified local housing needs in rural areas and they must meet certain defined criteria including design, mix and price.

We recognise that there are specific barriers to the development of these sites and so the new policy, if adopted, will allow an element of market housing of no more than 30% if 100% affordable housing cannot be delivered.

Rural housing

Provision of affordable housing in rural areas is important because of the largely rural nature of the district.

We support the development of affordable rural housing in the following ways:

- Use of planning policy to encourage the development of RES for rural settlements with a population under 3,000
- Use of S106 planning agreements to limit allocations in RES areas to people with a local residential, family or employment connection
- Encouragement of sustainable homes in RES areas e.g. new affordable homes in Marsh Gibbon and Tingewick which were built to Code Level 4 to help reduce fuel poverty
- Provision of grant support to the Bucks Rural Housing Enabler who is employed by Community Impact Bucks. The RHE has helped to significantly increase the Rural Exceptions Scheme programme for new affordable homes in the district
- AVDC membership of the Bucks Rural Housing Partnership which promotes the development of affordable housing in rural areas
- Some limited AVDC capital grant support where required for the development of new affordable homes in rural areas

Housing and support

In partnership with Bucks County Council we aim to help meet the housing needs of the following client groups:-

- Learning Disability

- Physical and Sensory Disability
- Mental Health
- Older People
- People at risk of homelessness

We will continue to support our RP partners in developing homes that are accessible for these groups of people.

Other forms of affordable housing

High house prices mean we must continue to provide access to alternative tenure options, such as low cost home ownership and flexible tenure that enable people to buy their own home. As the demand for owner occupation rises, we will explore different types of shared equity models to enable more people to access low cost home ownership.

Reducing housing tenancy fraud

At a time when demand for social housing is far exceeding supply, it is estimated that up to 50,000 homes may be unlawfully sublet, which equates to more than 1 in 100 housing association and council homes across England. With temporary accommodation for homeless families costing around £18,000 per family, per year, there is a significant cost to the public purse. We will work with Registered Providers to explore various options for tackling tenancy fraud.

Strategic Aim 2:

Prevent and reduce homelessness

Homelessness legislation requires Aylesbury Vale District Council to secure accommodation for households who are deemed to be statutorily homeless and provide advice and assistance to those in housing need. There is an immediate duty on the local authority to provide interim accommodation for anyone they have reason to believe may be homeless and in priority need whilst they investigate the individual's circumstances.

To access assistance under the homelessness legislation the council has a duty to those who meet the following criteria:

- eligible for assistance – which will not apply to certain people who have lived abroad
- legally classed as homeless – by having no accommodation that is available and reasonable to occupy, anywhere in the UK or abroad
- in priority need – applying to all households that include a pregnant woman or are responsible for dependent children; to some households consisting of a 16-17 year old or a care leaver aged 18-21 years old; or where someone in the household is vulnerable, e.g. because of old age, mental or physical health problems; or by being in prison, care or the armed forces
- unintentionally homeless – those who have not deliberately done, or failed to do, something that caused them to become homeless, such as failing to make rent or mortgage payments when they could have afforded to do so.

The legislation also requires us to take steps to prevent homelessness. The prevention of homelessness is a key priority for us. The number of people presenting as homeless has increased over time.

The main causes of homelessness in Aylesbury Vale in 2012/13 in order of priority are as follows:

- Loss of rented or tied accommodation
- Parents no longer able or willing to accommodate
- Domestic violence (mainly referrals from outside the district)

Wherever possible we aim to help people stay in their own homes, if that is the most suitable option. We offer a range of services to help with prevention, including mediation with families and landlords, facilitating mortgage rescue finance, and tenancy advice.

Another cornerstone of our service is the Housing Debt Advice Service. Our advisors intervene to help people manage the type of multiple debt which can lead to eviction from both owner occupied and private or social rented accommodation.

For those people who are homeless, we offer good quality temporary accommodation and only use bed and breakfast accommodation in emergency situations. We manage a private rent scheme which offers a deposit guarantee as well as an inventory and pre-tenancy inspection service.

Over the next few years we face a number of challenges in our efforts to reduce homelessness. The introduction of the government's welfare reforms and the continuing economic uncertainty may lead to an increase in the numbers of homeless people approaching us for assistance.

Part of our focus on improving our service will be to participate in a government scheme to achieve Gold Standard status. This peer-led scheme will provide training, support and an online toolkit to help councils identify areas for improvement and help to make services run more efficiently. We need to meet 10 key commitments in order to achieve this status; these are outlined in the Action Plan on pages 16-27.

In the preparation of this strategy we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our homelessness service. The aim of the Aylesbury Vale District Council Homelessness Review 2013 was to ascertain the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the district and the services available to deal with and prevent homelessness. The information gathered has helped to shape the direction of this strategy and the council's homelessness services. The key themes from the review are as follows:

- **Impact of welfare reforms -** concern was expressed from many stakeholders as to the potential impact of the welfare reforms of the last few years on levels of homelessness. The affordability of housing locally in both the social and private sector will need to be monitored and AVDC will need to continue to work closely with their partners in the area to respond to emerging issues.

- **Private Rent Sector -** use of the private rent sector to address homelessness problems locally provides both challenges and opportunities. The Localism Act 2011 enables local authorities to use private rented accommodation in order to discharge their homelessness duties but the welfare reforms are making landlords more hesitant to accept households in receipt of benefits as tenants. AVDC will need to continue to develop its relationship with local landlords in order to ensure that the private sector is a viable option as a homelessness solution.

- **Enhancing AVDC's Housing and Homelessness Services -** the consultation with stakeholders and service users showed that AVDC's housing and homelessness services were generally considered good. However, suggestions were made for improvement, for example, making more information available on housing options and homelessness services in the district, and 'signposting' those in need of assistance to organisations and agencies that could help. AVDC's commitment to working to achieve the Gold Standard in homelessness services will help to deliver an enhanced service.

- **Improving joint working between statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations -** this issue is one that is often identified as requiring constant review and improvement. No one organisation can solve homelessness and it can only be tackled through a joined up, multi-agency approach. Problems identified were a lack of sufficient awareness between agencies and organisations of each others' services and issues over sharing information on vulnerable clients.

- **Improving access to temporary accommodation for single non-priority homeless -** the lack of a direct access hostel in the district is an on-going issue and needs to be addressed. AVDC will continue to work with local partners to try to develop suitable direct access accommodation, which prevents the need for homeless individuals having to be referred out of the district for hostel accommodation.

The Strategy Action Plan will be externally monitored by the AVDC Homelessness Prevention Group; a multi-agency group chaired by AVDC which meets on a quarterly basis.

Strategic Aim 3:

Maximise the use of private sector homes

According to the 2011 Census, there are 19,104 households in the district living in rented accommodation (including those living rent free), which is a 22% increase since 2001. 13% of households live in the private rented sector within the Vale, which is slightly below the national average (16.5%). It is a growing part of the housing market and the government is enouraging a wider range of investors to build houses for private rent. There are a significant number of people making long term family homes in the private sector and we must ensure that they are living in safe housing conditions managed by decent landlords.

With the national slowdown in new housing supply and the increasing challenges we face with the delivery of new affordable homes, focussing solely on building new homes will not meet the demand for affordable housing. More and more people are moving into the private rented sector and according to government figures, the number of households living in private rented accommodation has risen to the same level as those in social housing.

The AVDC Private Sector Housing Regeneration Strategy outlines our priorities in greater detail. We will review this strategy to ensure it remains focused on the current issues.

### Improving standards in the private rented sector

We have an active landlords' forum and host regular meetings to give landlords and agents the opportunity to network and share information. The forum also enables us to provide updates on changes in legislation and reinforce landlords' responsibilities. Industry professionals deliver presentations on key issues affecting landlords. We host both daytime and evening events to encourage participation from letting agents and over the last year, we have seen an increase in participation. We strive to continuously improve the attendance of the forum through publicity and building on our relationships with local landlords and agents. We believe the launch of the National Landlords Association's Accreditation Scheme in June 2013 will help landlords to provide a more professional service to their tenants.

We work with landlords to improve management and property standards in the district; however where landlords refuse to comply with the legal requirements, we must be ready to use our enforcement powers.

Raising the profile of the AVDC Private Rent Scheme

We have been working in partnership with landlords, letting agents and tenants on the Private Rent Scheme for over ten years and between 2008-2013 we helped 479 households to find a suitable home. Despite changes over the past few years in the way that housing benefit is paid i.e. directly to tenants rather than landlords, the scheme is still popular. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find
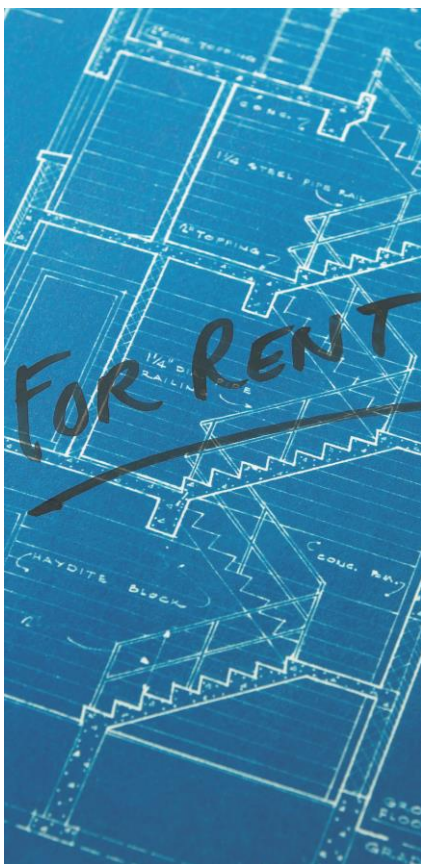
landlords who will join the scheme and this is likely to worsen after Universal Credit is launched in the Vale. To try and mitigate this, we are working with the local Credit Union on a scheme for landlords whereby they would get rent paid directly to them. This should encourage more landlords to sign up to the scheme.

We have built strong links with local letting agents and we aim to develop our relationships with them in order to increase the number of landlords on the scheme.

Developing a strategy for dealing with illegal evictions or harassment

The majority of private landlords in the district operate in a law-abiding and professional manner; however, there are a few rogue landlords who give the private rented sector a bad name. We intend to deal with these landlords in a number of ways, including ensuring tenants are informed of their rights and responsibilities, and supporting them though the court system. We have recently submitted a funding bid to tackle rogue landlords which we hope we can use to support private tenants experiencing harassment.

Tackling long-term empty properties

As of August 2013 there were 140 long-term empty properties in the district (i.e. empty for two or more years). Some of these are vacant for good reasons, such as awaiting probate or subject to on-going

work. Whilst the level of empty properties in the Vale is a proportionately small part of the housing stock, we continue to encourage owners to bring properties back in to use.

The Affordable Housing Loans Scheme was set up in partnership with a Registered Provider, to assist owners of empty properties in bringing them back into use as affordable housing for a specified length of time. We will explore the potential for more schemes like this.

Encourage the development of a Build to Rent scheme

The Build to Rent Fund was launched by the government in December 2012. The 2013 government's budget provided £1bn in funding to help increase the supply of new private rented housing and to provide opportunities for new institutional investment in the sector. We will explore the potential for developing or supporting a Build to Rent scheme in the district and will take advantage of any opportunities should they arise.

Strategic Aim 4:

Respond to the challenges of the welfare reforms

Significant changes to the nature of the welfare system have been introduced by the government with the stated aim of making people better off in employment, and reducing the dependency of households on state assistance. The reforms to the welfare system have created many new challenges in housing provision and homelessness prevention. The risk of homelessness for those households with housing benefit reductions has increased, which makes the best use of available social housing stock a priority.

The welfare reforms encompass a large number of changes. Alongside Universal Credit, the overall Benefit Cap and the new size criteria, there are also reforms to the Council Tax Benefit and the disability benefit systems.

Assist clients in the delivery of Universal Credit

As the reforms become established we need to keep updated and informed about any increased demand on our service provision. We will monitor these changes and take action where appropriate to assist residents with these changes.

Continue to monitor the effects of the new size criteria and take action to ensure residents are assisted as far as possible

The new size criteria for social rent properties stipulates that children of different genders must share a room up to the age of ten, while children of the same gender must share a room up to the age of fifteen. Those tenants who are deemed to have an excess bedroom(s) for their needs will have their housing benefit payments reduced. We will monitor the on-going effects of the new size criteria and work with Registered Providers to help residents who are under-occupying to downsize to smaller homes.

This will also increase the demand for one and two bedroomed properties (which are already in short supply) and will influence the type of affordable housing that is delivered in the future.

Ensure that families are helped to cope with the overall Benefit Cap

The overall Benefit Cap limits the amount of benefit a household can receive to: £26,000 (as of September 2013) per annum (£500 per week) for a family/couple, and £18,200 (£350 per week) for a single person. The Cap will reduce the weekly housing benefit entitlement to ensure that households are under this capped limit. The number of households affected by the Cap in the Vale is fewer than the new size criteria, but the effects will be greater. Lone parent households with large numbers of children will be the worst affected, with a small number of households losing over £150 per week in housing benefit. Supporting these families is important as they will be at high risk of rent

arrears and homelessness. We have offered one-to-one interviews with all households affected by the Cap to advise them of their options and how to best access the housing services available to them. There are also plans underway, in conjunction with Children's Services at Bucks County Council, to offer a work programme to those affected by the Cap. Qualifying for working tax credit is a method of avoiding the Cap and also ties in with the wider aim of the reforms, of assisting residents with finding work and reducing dependency on state welfare.

Assist clients in the delivery of Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the new benefit payment which applies to people who are in or out of work; combining out-of-work benefits, child benefit/tax credits, housing benefit and most other state support, into one single, monthly payment.

We will explore how AVDC can assist in the implementation of Universal Credit in partnership with relevant agencies, through the Local Support Services Framework.

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2014 - 2017

Strategic Aim 1: Maximise the supply of affordable housing

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
1.1	Increase the supply of new affordable homes	Develop 35% affordable homes on new sites with 15 or more dwellings (subject to new Vale of Aylesbury plan) Enable additional affordable rural housing Completions reported quarterly for AVDC Corporate Plan update 2014/15 2015/16 } TBC 2016/17 Source alternative funding streams for the provision of affordable housing Investigate alternative shared equity models Assess the potential for alternative tenure options	Limited AVDC capital funding programme in place Homes & Communities Agency grant funding not available on S106 sites RP funding	On-going	AVDC lead: Housing Development Team (HDT) AVDC Planning Division AVDC Legal Team Registered Providers (RPs) Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) Rural Housing Enabler Private developers	

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
1.2	Work with partners to enable provision of housing for people with additional needs	Accommodation for people with a disability A proportion of new affordable homes to be mobility levels 1-3 Support the provision of flats for single vulnerable homeless	Limited AVDC capital funding programme in place HCA RP funding Bucks County Council (BCC)	On-going	AVDC lead: HDT BCC HCA RPs Private developers	BCC undertaking projections of housing need for elderly, mental health problems, physical disability, learning disability
1.3	Contribute to the drafting of an affordable housing supporting policy document as part of the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP)	Liaise with Planning colleagues on the preparation of more detailed guidance on affordable housing The adoption of an affordable housing SPD as part of the VAP	Existing	December 2014	AVDC lead: HDT AVDC Forward Plans Team	
1.4	Consider options for helping to reduce social housing tenancy fraud	Look at RPs actions on tackling social tenancy fraud Monitor the CLG's social housing fraud funding	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Revenues and Benefits RPs	

Strategic Aim 2: Prevent and reduce homelessness

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
2.1	Achieve the key outcomes as set out in the ten local challenges in DCLG's **"Making Every contact count"** as outlined below:	Work towards a homelessness prevention service accreditation to achieve the government's Gold Standard Set up a local authority peer group (2/3) for assessment		On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Housing Advice Team (HAT) Peer authority/ies	
	1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services	Data and information sharing protocol between all partners Review working practices with Bucks County Council in relation to vulnerable homeless clients Improve referral mechanisms and feedback between agencies Investigate the feasibility of a multi-agency referral form	Existing Discretionary Housing Pot BCC Homelessness Prevention Grant	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC HAT AVDC Environmental Health Team BCC Homelessness Prevention Group	
	2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs	Actively engage with Voluntary and Statutory agencies	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: HAT AVDC SHT Homelessness Prevention Group	

Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	Work with partners to produce a comprehensive information pack for homeless people Engage with the local Job Centre Plus and investigate the feasibility of drop in advice sessions			Job Centre Plus RP's Aylesbury College	
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients	Monitor the issuing of letters outlining advice previously given Audit of related homelessness services in the district Review Homelessness Directory to make more user-friendly	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: Housing Options Team (HOT) AVDC SHT Homelessness Prevention Group	
4. To adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative	Review "crash pad"" facility under No Second Night Out and secure the provision of short term emergency accommodation for rough sleepers Help facilitate move-on accommodation	Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Single Homeless (BOSH) funding ceases in April 2014	April 2014	AVDC Lead: SHT AVDC HAT BOSH Group	

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support	Investigate the feasibility of providing a direct access hostel for non-priority single homeless people Support tenancy sustainment initiatives and pre-tenancy training Implement changes to Bucks Home Choice Transfers & Allocations Policy including training for staff and partner agencies	No revenue or capital funding identified at present	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC HAT and HOT Homelessness Prevention Group RPs Bucks Floating Support The Hub CAB BCC Bucks Home Choice Practitioners Group	
	6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords	Develop and implement a policy for discharging our homeless duty, including a proportion of intentionally homeless applicants, to the private rented sector Further support partner organisations to access the private rented sector Strengthen Housing advice activities to effectively tackle issues such as illegal evictions, harassment, disrepair etc.	Additional training for Housing Advice staff	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC HAT Private landlords and letting agents AVDC HAT AVDC Legal AVDC HAT	

Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	Expand AVDC's Private Rent Scheme to include non-priority applicants				
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme	Work with lenders to ensure that homeowners threatened with repossession continue to be referred to AVDC Continue to monitor the government's mortgage repossession protocol Source funding to ensure continuation of the scheme		On-going	AVDC lead: Budget Advice Team AVDC HDT CAB	
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs	Review the role of Homelessness Prevention Group to encourage participation in the Strategy Action Plan outcomes, and strengthen partnership action Strengthen working relationships with both voluntary and statutory agencies to help prevent homelessness To annually update core statistics in the homelessness review	Existing	On-going On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC HAT Homelessness Prevention Group	

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation	Encourage sign up and implementation of 16 & 17 year olds protocol by the relevant authorities Sustain the non- placement of 16 & 17 year olds in Bed and Breakfast accommodation		2014 On-going	AVDC lead: HAT BCC Bucks district councils	Draft protocol for referrals with BCC prepared
	10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks	Sustain the non-placement of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation		On-going	AVDC lead: HAT	
2.2	All residents have fair and equal access to housing services	Produce equalities report on the housing needs and advice service Ensure Equalities Impact Assessments are up-to-date Evaluate relevant statistical information and ensure consistency and accuracy Continue to monitor the government's Rent Protocol for social landlords	Existing	Annually 2014 On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Information Performance and Statistics Team AVDC HAT	

Strategic Aim 3: Maximise the use of private sector homes

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
3.1	Improve standards in the Private Rented Sector	Publicise and promote Landlords' Forum to landlords and agents Promote National Landlords Association's accreditation scheme Review and update the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy Take appropriate enforcement action to achieve minimum property standards	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Environmental Health Team Landlords' Forum Members National Landlords' Association	
3.2	Raise the profile of the AVDC Private Rent Scheme	Increase the number of private landlords within the scheme Build relationships with letting agents and negotiate preferential referencing terms with preferred letting agents for our clients Promote scheme at Landlords' Forum and RP Development Forum	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: HAT AVDC SHT AVDC Environmental Health Team Landlords and Letting Agents RPs	

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		Promote and publicise successes of the scheme		On-going	CAB Aylesbury Vale Credit Union	
		Access market rented properties offered by Registered Providers				
		Draft and implement an AVDC Rent in Advance policy				
		Investigate the potential for developing a rent rescue fund				
		Work with the Credit Union to establish a rent service scheme for landlords				
3.3	Develop a strategy for dealing with illegal evictions or harassment and providing support to private tenants	Establish an agreement with CAB regarding Court representation	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: HAT AVDC SHT AVDC Private Sector Housing Team AVDC Legal Team Citizens Advice Bureau	
		Provide information relating to 'what to do if you are a victim' on AVDC website				
		Review and update current information leaflets				
		Work to tackle rogue landlords				
		Investigate the feasibility of the provision of a tenancy relations service				

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
3.4	Tackle long-term empty properties	A decrease in long-term empties by a factor of 10 per year by promoting the following schemes: • Empty Home Loans Schemes • Private Sector Leasing Scheme Investigate the potential for additional schemes to bring empties back into use Take appropriate enforcement action against landlords unwilling to utilise long-term empty properties Review and update the Empty Homes Strategy	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: Private Sector Housing Team	
3.5	Regulate all Houses in Multiple Occupation	Investigate the potential for additional licensing for HMOs	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: Private Sector Housing Team	
3.6	Explore the potential for developing or supporting a Build to Rent scheme	Investigate whether RP partners are interested in developing a Build to Rent scheme Monitor future Build to Rent bidding rounds and support bids in the district	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT HCA RPs Private developers	

Strategic Aim 4: Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
4.1	Continue to review the overall impact of the Welfare Reforms on Aylesbury Vale	Gain an understanding of the local impact of reforms and tailor relevant services accordingly Identify potential service changes	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Revenues and Benefits RPs	
4.2	Continue to monitor the effects of the new size criteria and take action to ensure residents are assisted as far as possible	Review all statistics issued by the DWP Host a home swapping event to help tenants wishing to downsize Conduct a mapping exercise to ascertain how RP's are helping tenants to downsize Work closely with Registered Providers to ensure tenants are given support	Existing	March 2014	AVDC lead: SHT RPs DWP	
4.3	Ensure that families are helped to cope with the overall Benefit Cap	Limit the effects of the cap on families by working closely with BCC Children's Services Offer direct support to families where possible	Existing	March 2014	AVDC lead: SHT DWP Bucks CC (Children's Services)	Working with BCC Children's Services to establish an into work programme for the benefit cap – early stages £30k DHP funding secured for PRS tenants for Rent in Advance

	Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		Offer 'Rent in Advance' payments to suitable tenants on the AVDC private rent scheme			Bucks 'Task and Finish Group'	
4.4	Assist Clients in the delivery of Universal Credit (UC)	Maintain strong communications with the DWP Ensure all AVDC Housing staff are fully informed about the details of UC	Existing Potential for IT training / resources	UC rollout date in Aylesbury Vale	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Revenues and Benefits DWP	

If you would like this information in an accessible
format (for example in large print or by email)
or another language please phone: 01296 585360
or email: housingneeds@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

AVDC
AYLESBURY VALE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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October 2013.

**AYLESBURY VALE COMMUNITY COHESION AND INTEGRATION STRATEGY -
PROGRESS REPORT**

1   Purpose

1.1   To inform Members about Aylesbury Vale District Council's progress in
        implementing the Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy for Aylesbury
        Vale. The strategy was last reviewed by scrutiny in July 2011.

2   Recommendations/for decision

2.1   That Members note the report and highlight any points they wish to make
        regarding progress and future direction of the strategy.

3   Background

3.1   In 2008, in partnership with the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, Thames
        Valley Police and Buckinghamshire County Council, AVDC commissioned
        The Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo) to establish a baseline
        assessment of cohesion within Aylesbury Vale from which a strategy could be
        developed. This was in response to government guidance about community
        cohesion.

3.2   The Aylesbury Vale Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy was
        developed as a partnership strategy, and adopted by the Aylesbury Vale
        Local Strategic Partnership in June 2010, and by Aylesbury Vale District
        Council in July 2010. It identified the following priorities:

        Priority 1   Building cohesion within and between new and existing
                          communities to address projected population and housing
                          growth

        Priority 2   Tackling deprivation and disadvantage in the district

        Priority 3   Activities and facilities for young people and addressing any
                          intergenerational tensions

        Priority 4   Empowering and modernising the voluntary and community
                          sector

3.3   Community cohesion and integration continue to be important issues
        nationally, and this is illustrated in a Department of Communities and Local
        Government report; 'Creating the Conditions for Integration' (2012)[1]. This
        report emphasises the role of councils and other organisations in creating the
        conditions in which people share similar life opportunities, where there exists
        a common vision and where bridges are built between diverse communities.

4   Implementing the strategy

4.1   Many of the council's activities and initiatives contribute to community
        cohesion, for example many of the council's leisure services and events. The
        following paragraphs provide examples of various initiatives and projects
        which are specifically contributing to the implementation of the strategy in

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[1] www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system...data/...2092103.pdf

support of each of the priorities. It focuses on the contribution of the council, and not all of the partners to the strategy.

<u>Priority 1: Building cohesion within and between existing communities to address projected population and housing growth</u>

4.2   AVDC, as the lead agency, has initiated an action plan and brought together local partners to support the new community on the new Berryfields estate, Aylesbury. A partnership group is made up of representatives from the Police, GP practice, registered housing providers, community centre manager, faith groups, and the County Council. The group aims to identify and address issues faced by residents living on this new estate. Emphasis is on sharing resources, responsibilities and good practice to achieve outcomes and work in a collaborative way. The group has been instrumental in ensuring that the temporary community centre was opened with minimum delay; has organised a weekly coffee morning and toddler group, and three events to encourage new residents to meet together. A residents' association and community website[2] have also recently been established.

4.3   We have continued to work with parish and town councils to support the development of Neighbourhood Plans. Ten Neighbourhood Areas have been approved and are working towards Neighbourhood Plans.

4.4   Parish and town councils in Aylesbury Vale are now able to apply for New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding under the council's new funding scheme. £491,000 is available in 2013/14 for communities which have been affected by growth.

4.5   We have been working with the Police this year to re-launch the Independent Advisory Group, to make sure that it is as representative of the community as possible, and that its members can inform the Police and the council about a range of community related issues.

<u>Priority 2: Tackling deprivation and disadvantage in the district particularly amongst the BME population who appear to be the most disadvantaged in terms of housing, education and employment</u>

4.6   Women from minority communities continue to be amongst the most isolated and disadvantaged. A number of projects have evolved from our *Women as Community Leaders of Tomorrow* programme held in 2011/12, for example:
   i.   Iqra - this group now provides weekly drop-ins, at a variety of locations in Aylesbury, for advice and advocacy for women who may be facing multiple disadvantage.
   ii.   'Grey side of the sky' is a documentary by a community filmmaker, which explores the lives of Asian women in the context of migration to the UK. The documentary has been shown extensively throughout Buckinghamshire.
   iii. Opportunities for diverse groups of women to meet through our annual International Women's Day activities.
   iv.   A women only 'Movers and Shakers' exercise group has been established in Aylesbury specifically to meet an identified gap in provision for Asian women.

4.7   Other projects that have been delivered include:

   i.   The 'citizen's university' which delivered bite sized training modules intended to increase personal development and skills with wider

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[2] http://berryfieldsaylesbury.wix.com/ourcommunity

community benefits, for example: 'Healthy Households', 'Strong Communities', 'Creative Communities' and 'Safer Communities'.

ii. Loan Shark and benefit reform training for the voluntary and community sector. The purpose of this training was to raise awareness and also to highlight the advice and support that is available to individuals and groups.

iii. Engagement with people with learning disabilities and people with visual impairments to understand what they find difficult in accessing services, feedback has been used to inform AVDC services.

iv. The Safe Places scheme, which provides a safe place for vulnerable people to go and receive help, if they feel uncomfortable or upset in some way, whilst out in the community.

v. The Winter Warmth project has provided shelter and a hot meal to homeless households on a nightly basis during the coldest months of the winter, and have received grant funding from the Homelessness Grant.

Priority 3: Activities and facilities for young people and addressing any intergenerational tensions

4.8 Working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector a range of projects have been developed for young people:

i. A three day photography and fashion shoot workshop in the Quarrendon area to provide young people with some work related skills to put on their curriculum vitae.

ii. A robbery awareness film 'Snatched' was made with young people and shown throughout schools in the Vale.

iii. Young people from the Mosque premiered a drug awareness film, made in partnership with Islah and Thames Valley Police.

iv. Mock interviews were offered to young people from the Quarrendon area following some work with Connexions, allowing young people not in employment, education or training, the opportunity to experience a formal interview process.

4.9 Responding to our changing demographics, we have held 4 information fairs throughout the year addressing the needs of older people in our community and an older people's conference is planned for early next year. We also contributed to establishing a Men in Sheds project in Aylesbury, aimed at reducing social isolation, improving health and wellbeing and also promoting collaborative learning.

4.10 We continue to fund Aylesbury Youth Action, who deliver a variety of intergenerational activities in sheltered schemes throughout the year.

Priority 4: Empowering and modernising the voluntary and community

4.11 As part of our work in this area, we continue to run advice surgeries and funding fairs throughout the year for voluntary sector organisations.

4.12 We continue to provide funding to support a range of voluntary sector providers in the district. During 2012/13 the Community Chest provided funding to 83 projects thereby supporting 2000 volunteering opportunities.

4.13 An Ageing Well programme is being developed in Buckingham. The aim is to recognise all the good things about growing older in the town, and consider how to make things even better. The programme began with 2 workshops in the community centre which attracted over 70 local people and colleagues from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The resulting ideas are being worked into an action plan.

4.14 In addition to the work in Buckingham we continue to work to support older residents in the Haddenham and Long Crendon local area forum and have also extended into the Winslow LAF area.

4.15 We have worked closely with interfaith groups to celebrate National Interfaith week in November. The event last year brought different communities together to share music, food and dance.

5. Measuring

5.1 In their original report, ICoCo identified that Aylesbury Vale was generally a cohesive community, based on the levels of deprivation, our history of race and wider community relations and perception measures. In this context there has been little change over the past few years. We remain amongst the most prosperous districts in England and demonstrated community resilience when faced with an English Defence League protest in 2011.

5.2 As part of a corporate consultation carried out in 2011/12, 74% of respondents agreed with the statement 'local people pull together'; and 92% of people felt happy living in the Vale. This feeling of 'togetherness' is enhanced by the numerous community events which continue to take place across the district, not least the Olympic celebrations in 2012.

5.3 ICoCo also identified some challenges facing our community as our demographic profile changes. Whilst it is not currently possible to replicate all of the data used by ICoCo, the following statistics, from the 2011 Census, show how our community has changed over the past few years, which may impact on the levels of cohesion. We will continue to monitor the impact of these changes.

   i. There has been a 5% increase in population since 2001, which now stands at 174,137.
   ii. 11% of our residents were born outside the UK, and 44% of those arrived in the last 10 years.
   iii. 90% of residents are from a white ethnic background, a 4% decrease since 2001. 10% of all households are from non-white ethnic backgrounds, this is an increase of 83% since 2001.
   iv. In 2001, the number of people who are of no faith was 16%, in 2011 this had risen to 26%.
   v. There has been a reduction in the number of people who are Christian, from 74% to 62%. There has also been an increase in people who are Muslim, rising from 3 to 4%. All the other faiths, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and 'other', recorded under 1% for each faith group.
   vi. 20% of the housing register applicants are from Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities (BAME). Indicating an over-reliance on this form of tenure for these communities.
   vii. Pupils from Asian and Black households are achieving below the national average at GCSE level, with only 50% of young people from Asian background and 52% of young Black people gaining five A-C grades, including English and maths.
   viii. We have an ageing population - there has been an increase of 4% in the number of households containing people of pensionable age, since 2001. This is currently 19%. The 60 – 64 year age groups showed the biggest increase since the last census in 2001, with a 47% increase.
   ix. Indices of deprivation 2010 (and the ONS population estimate of the same year) show that 14% of the population live in the 4 most disadvantaged wards in the district. Of those 24% are from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

6. Next steps

6.1 Our aim in 2010 was to promote cohesive communities, strengthening intergenerational, interfaith and cultural understanding against the key challenges identified by ICoCo.

6.2 Our current strategy has been in place for the past three years and we are proposing to review this in 2014, as part of the Aylesbury Vale Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

7. Resource implication

7.1 There are no new resource implications arising directly from the Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy. The cost of activities is currently met through officer time and existing budgets.

8. Response to Key Aims and Objectives

8.1 The cohesion and Integration strategy aims to improve the living experience in the Vale by increasing inclusivity, building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector, and increasing community resilience by encouraging active participation.

Contact Officer   Claire Paine 01296 585826
Background Documents   Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy

Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy for Aylesbury Vale

June 2010

1. Introduction

The overall aim of this strategy is to foster a community in which people feel they belong to the area; where the diversity of our community is valued, difference is appreciated and understood, and where people share a sense of fairness in the delivery of local services.

It is only by listening to our communities and also sharing our collective resources, skills and experience, that these aspirations can be achieved.

This is Aylesbury Vale's first cohesion strategy, therefore a starting place, intended to encourage discussion and debate about how we can all work together to achieve our vision for the whole of the Vale. This strategy is for the whole of the district and the priorities identified within it result from research. This shows that there are many factors which influence feelings of cohesion in our different communities and when considering priorities, focus should not be given to one at the expense of another.

This Strategy has been informed by a review of cohesion and integration within Aylesbury Vale, conducted by the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo)[3]. The review was commissioned by the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, Thames Valley Police, Aylesbury Vale District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council.

The report identified good practice in relation to cohesion and provided a baseline from which future work could be progressed, priorities identified, and a greater understanding of our communities gained.

The strategy begins with a brief overview of the national and local context in relation to cohesion. The key challenges and priorities facing the Vale are then summarised, and proposed actions and intended outcomes to address these identified.

Much good work is already being done through the work of agencies such as Connexions, Housing Associations, Bucks County Council, Thames Valley Police, Aylesbury Vale District Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector, to name but a few. Agreeing a delivery plan with these and other organisations, will draw this work together, and help us to identify other opportunities to deliver Aylesbury Vale's Cohesion Strategy.

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[3] A Review of Integration and Community Cohesion in Aylesbury Vale; Institute of Community Cohesion (2009)

2. Our vision for Community Cohesion

> *'That the communities of Aylesbury Vale come together to share their interests, life experiences, cultures and beliefs, to develop a common sense of belonging and respect for one another, and to develop strong and positive relationships which fully acknowledge the value of diversity.'[4]*

Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new and existing residents to develop a sense of belonging to Aylesbury Vale.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

1   People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities.

2   People knowing their rights and responsibilities.

3   People trusting one another and institutions to act fairly.

And three ways of living together:

1   A shared vision and sense of belonging.

2   A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside valuing diversity.

3   Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

Community cohesion is not about 'making' people get on well together, but about removing barriers which may prohibit inclusion and interaction. These barriers include poor life, health, economic, educational, housing and recreational opportunities[5]. Such issues are complex, inter-related and long term in nature and can only be addressed by the local public, private and voluntary sector partners working together with the local community.

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[4] The vision reflects the definition set out by Government in Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper (2006) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government

[5] This reflects the principles of equalities legislation in terns of race, disability, age, gender, transgender, sexual orientation, religion or belief and their relationship with life chances and socio –economic status. Race Relations Act (1976 as amended by the Race relations (Amendment Act) 2000, Disability Discrimination Act (1995 & 2005), Equality Act (2006), Equality Act 2010.

3. National Context

Community cohesion is a theme running throughout central government policy following disturbances in some northern UK towns in 2001 and the subsequent research into possible causes. The findings indicated that communities were living ' parallel lives' divided by geography, schools, income, religion, ethnicity, culture, housing and employment.[6]

A report prepared in 2005 for the Department of Communities and Local Government provided some insights on predicting and measuring community cohesion.[7] The report found that:

- Once other factors are accounted for ethnic diversity is, in most cases, positively associated with community cohesion. However, this relationship will depend on an area having a broad mix of residents from different ethnic groups.

- An increasing percentage of in-migration of people born outside the UK could have a negative influence on cohesion.

- Having friends from ethnic groups other than one's own was a strong predictor of cohesion.

- Disadvantage and deprivation consistently undermined cohesion, though not all deprived areas are low on cohesion.

- Increasing levels of crime and fear of crime are both strong negative predictors of cohesion.

- Feeling able to influence local decisions is a positive indicator of cohesion. However, individuals feeling that they are unfairly treated because of their race has a strong negative impact on cohesion.

- Levels of volunteering is a positive predictor on cohesion.

The Government White Paper, **Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006)** emphasised the 'place shaping' role of local government in promoting local democracy and cohesion. This is based upon the following guiding principles:

- Strong leadership and engagement
- Developing shared values
- Preventing the problems of tomorrow through conflict resolution
- Good information to base service delivery on
- Visible work on tackling inequalities
- Involving young people
- Interfaith work
- Partnership and the third sector

The **Education and Inspections Act (2006)** introduced a new duty for schools to promote community cohesion. This came in to force in September 2007. The Act also requires Ofsted to inspect and report on the contribution and progress that schools are making.

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[6] State of English Cities- a research study. Independent report to the Department of Communities and Local Government (2006)
[7] Predictors of Community Cohesion: Multi-Level Modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey DCLG (2008)

In 2009, these themes were brought together when the government introduced targets for local authorities aimed at building cohesive, active and empowered communities.[8]

At a local level this is monitored by three new **national indicators:**

National Indicator 1 – Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

National Indicator 2 – Percentage of people who believe that they belong to their neighbourhood.

National Indicator 4 – The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

4. Local Context

The **Sustainable Community Strategy for Aylesbury Vale District: (2009-26)**, is an over-arching, long term plan for Aylesbury Vale produced by Aylesbury Vale Local Strategic Partnership[9]. It provides a framework allowing organisations to take collective responsibility for delivering the vision for our area which is:

In 2026 Aylesbury Vale will be a place in which:

- Growth is planned to ensure the best outcomes for existing and future residents and businesses, whilst protecting and enhancing the individuality and natural environment of our rural areas.

- Infrastructure and services are delivered at the right time, in the right place and in the right way

- New developments are exemplars of excellent design, bringing benefits to existing communities and help us adapt to climate change

- The Vale is an attractive and desirable location for residents and visitors, with Aylesbury town centre providing high quality retail, leisure and employment for the district.

- Everyone has access to excellent education, training and life-long learning opportunities.

- Everyone works together to minimise their impact on the environment.

- The Vale is well connected by road, rail and electronically within the area and beyond.

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[8] Public Service Agreement 21 (2009) visit:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about_the_cabinet_office/publicserviceagreements.aspx

[9] The Local Strategic Partnership includes representatives from the following agencies; Aylesbury Vale Advantage, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Bucks County Council, Bucks Fire & Rescue, NHS Buckinghamshire, Thames Valley Police, the Local Housing sector, the local voluntary and community sector, the local skills/learning sector, the local rural/environmental sector, the local business sector, Town Councils, Parish Councils

- There is a well managed network of green infrastructure conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the area, supporting a range recreational activities and reducing risk of flooding.

- A thriving voluntary and community sector is maintained and residents of new and established communities get on well and have a strong sense of belonging.

- Residents feel safe and live healthier, happier and longer lives, with smaller gaps between the most affluent and less well off communities.

- There is a common vision for the Vale across the whole population.

In order to deliver the vision for the Vale, five key themes have been identified within the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- *Thriving Economy*
- *Sustainable Environment*
- *Safe Communities*
- *Health and Wellbeing*
- *Cohesive and Strong Communities*

The following objectives have been identified as priorities within the Cohesive and Strong Communities theme:

Sustain and grow a thriving community sector

- Provide support for community participation and engagement.

Increase the confidence of communities

- Support communities to find local solutions to local problems.
- Support elected representatives in their community leadership role.

Help all communities get on well together

- Improve community cohesion, particularly between new and existing communities
- Provide facilities in new and existing communities, especially for young people.

Reduce levels of disadvantage

- Reduce social isolation.

The Aylesbury Vale Sustainable Community Strategy is part of the family of Sustainable Community Strategies in Buckinghamshire. One way in which these strategies are delivered is via the Local Area Agreement for Buckinghamshire. This is a contract between central government and local partners to achieve agreed targets to improve the quality of life for our residents, measured by national and local indicators. The current Agreement includes National Indicator 1, mentioned in section 2 above.

The Community Cohesion Strategy will contribute to achieving the objectives identified in the Cohesive and Strong Communities theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) as well as supporting the other themes in the SCS which impact on cohesion.

5. Key Challenges

It is within the context of the Sustainable Communities Strategy that the Institute of Community Cohesion provided an independent assessment of the steps we need to take collectively to build a more cohesive Aylesbury Vale. The review identified key challenges as well as priorities for action.

Aylesbury Vale shares few of the characteristics of northern UK towns where the issue of community cohesion first emerged. The district is amongst the most prosperous in England and has a relatively good history of race and wider community relations. The district scores well on public perception measures of cohesion from which comparative data is available. Broadly, residents feel that people of different backgrounds get on well together, and that they belong to and are satisfied with their area as a place to live. Numerous community events such as Charter Day, the Roald Dahl Festival, and Hobble on the Cobbles in Aylesbury, Buckingham Festival Fortnight, and the many village fetes enhance this feeling of 'togetherness'. Residents also consider that their local council is
trustworthy, treats all people fairly, and that they can influence decisions in their local area.[10]

These scores are consistent with similar districts where there are relatively low levels of deprivation, small ethnic minority communities, low levels of foreign migration, refugees and asylum seekers, and low levels of crime.

Nevertheless, as with most areas of the UK, local conditions in Aylesbury Vale are changing, for example, the ethnic composition of the area and age characteristics. New housing growth will also provide challenges and opportunities for new and existing communities.

Our challenge is to promote cohesive communities, strengthening intergenerational, interfaith and cultural understanding, and to promote equality of opportunity for all residents, ensuring that communities have the capacity to help themselves.

Based on their national and local research, the Institute of Community Cohesion identified the following key challenges facing our communities:

- The population of Aylesbury Vale is projected to grow by 28.5% by 2026 which will impact on cohesion.
- Investment in local communities should not be focused solely on new incoming populations.
- Building cohesion within and between new communities, and also our existing communities.
- The age profile of the district is changing, with less young people in the under 19 age groups and an increase in those aged above 65 (from the current figure of 13% to 19% by 2026).

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[10] Taken from the national Place Survey (2009) which collects information about people's perceptions of the place they live.

- Aylesbury Vale's black and minority ethnic (BME) population has also increased from 6% recorded in 2001 census to 8% in 2006.
- 16.1% of the district's primary school pupils were from BME communities which may indicate that these communities will continue to expand.
- 55% of families from these communities live within 6 of the district's 36 wards.
- The concentration of our BME populations in a small number of wards is reflected in 75% of children attending less integrated schools.
- Our BME population faces significant disadvantage in education, housing, employment and income levels.
- International migration has seen people, primarily from Poland and Pakistan, choosing to settle mainly within Aylesbury town.
- Knowledge about our BME groups requires development, particularly the diversity within our growing Muslim population.
- Challenges to cohesion were identified as being centred in and around the town of Aylesbury due to current and future levels of in migration to the area expected through housing growth.
- Although Aylesbury Vale has a strong voluntary and community sector, this would appear to be stronger in rural areas.
- 10% of people within Aylesbury Vale fear attack because of their ethnicity, colour or religion.
- Relationships between young people from different ethnic groups and/or geographical locations was an emerging theme indicating the potential for conflict.
- There exists a potential for intergenerational tension.
- Concern was raised over a lack of facilities for our young people.

To tackle the identified challenges, the report suggested the following priorities for the Cohesion Strategy:

Key Priorities

1	*Building cohesion within and between new and existing communities to address projected population and housing growth.*
2	*Tackling deprivation and disadvantage in the district..*
3	*Activities and facilities for young people and addressing any intergenerational tensions*
4	*Empowering and modernising the voluntary and community sector*

To address these priorities organisations need to continue to work closely together, linking key policies and strategies, and adopting a multi-agency, targeted approach whilst also working collaboratively with communities. Working this way we have the potential to address the structural causes of disadvantage and ensure equality of opportunity and outcome.

6. Priorities

Priority 1:   Building cohesion within and between new and existing communities to address projected population and housing growth

Community cohesion is relevant to all communities within the Vale. However, Aylesbury town is experiencing the largest amount of housing and population growth, accompanied by international migration. Our area's most deprived communities are concentrated within the town and it also has a more ethnically diverse population.

Skill levels, general crime figures and levels of deprivation indicate that those living in rural communities generally have a better quality of life. This is not to suggest that there are no identified challenges facing these communities.

Out-migration, dormitory settlements, transport links, perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour; in addition to a reduction in local services, all impact on levels of cohesion. Likewise, the closure of post offices, shops and pubs, which once provided a community focus. These changes within rural communities impact upon younger and older people, potentially leading to an increase in isolation. It is recognised that small housing developments can have an impact on rural communities.

ICoCo held a series of focus groups which have informed this strategy. Participants expressed their concerns regarding the impact of the housing growth and the accompanying changes it would bring within communities. There was also a fear of being 'left behind' should resources be targeted solely at new communities.

This strategy will need to focus on the priorities identified as unique to our urban centre whilst recognising the need to respond to the concerns of our rural communities.

Key challenges:

> - *Ensure that investment is not solely focused on new incoming populations.*
> - *Build cohesion between and within new and exiting communities, in particular in Aylesbury town, as the centre of housing growth.*
> - *Support rural communities effected by growth or rural isolation.*
> - *Identify and support new communities developing through international migration*
> - *Develop greater awareness and knowledge of our minority populations including; race, age, sexuality, disability, religion*

Proposed actions to address key challenges:

1   Examine the potential to 're-brand / re-scope' activities which seek to bring communities together, for example 'Play in the Park' and 'Proms in the Park', to give a sense of belonging to Aylesbury Vale.

2   Determine the size, location and potential difficulties which may be experienced by the Vale's new and emerging international migrant communities.

3   Support increased community empowerment through Town and Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Action Groups, Residents Associations and Local Area Forums, to encourage communities to find local solutions to local problems, and look for ways to bring different communities together.

4   Encourage engagement in local governance processes.

5   Make all parts of the Vale attractive and clean. Monitor graffiti - particularly any increase in racist graffiti which indicates a negative effect on cohesion – ensure removal is a priority.

6   Develop a joint approach with our registered social landlords and developers to encourage a sense of belonging for new residents in major development areas. Also, to develop an understanding of how relationships between new and existing communities can be fostered and a coherent approach to cohesion can be developed.

7   Review consultation and engagement structures to reflect the changing demographics within our communities.

8   Undertake regular consultation through the Place Survey and local surveys to monitor what local people think about new developments, whether they feel part of their community, any discernable changes in people's perceptions of living in Aylesbury Vale to inform service planning and delivery.

9   Gather feedback from town and parish councils and Registered Social Landlords about the impact of new developments to inform planning and service delivery to ensure resources are not focused on new communities at the expense of existing communities.

10 Examine how cohesion outcomes are being achieved through for example, the Local Development Framework, mixed tenure housing and Bucks Home Choice.

Intended outcome: To understand our changing communities and promote a common sense of belonging and vision for our local communities and district as a whole

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Priority 2:   Tackling deprivation and disadvantage in the district[11]

Overall, the socio-economic profile of the Vale indicates a relatively affluent population which is the 45th least deprived out of 354 local authority areas in England. Our most deprived areas are predominately situated within the town of Aylesbury. People living in these areas are more likely to be disadvantaged in education, employment, income and housing.

Of the district's primary school pupils 16.1% were from BME communities, which may indicate that these communities will continue to expand. 55% of families from these communities live in 6 of the district's 36 wards.

Although Aylesbury Vale does not exhibit the same geographical segregation as northern UK towns, our BME population is concentrated in a few of our most deprived wards. Geographical segregation between different ethnic groups may act as an indicator of low levels of cohesion.

Key challenges:

- *Our BME communities are the most likely to be disadvantaged in terms of education, the labour market, unemployment and also live in lower income households.*

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[11] This priority also reflects the principles of the Equality Act (2010) and the Child Poverty Act (2010) which introduce a public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic disadvantage.

> - *10% of people within Aylesbury Vale fear attack because of their ethnicity, colour or religion.*
> - *There are pockets of relative deprivation within our area. 14.6% of Aylesbury's white population live within these areas, and 36.4% of our BME communities.*
> - *Gain a clearer understanding of the factors which lead to economic disadvantage in rural locations*

Proposed actions to address key challenges:

1   Understand who is accessing services and how representative they are of our community as a whole. Determine which groups, if any, are underrepresented in terms of accessing services. Identify why groups are unrepresented and develop appropriate actions to increase participation and inclusion.

2   Ensure that cohesion is mainstreamed into our multi–agency approach to tackle deprivation and disadvantage within our district, using available data and community feedback to prioritise activities.

3   Further develop our understanding of Aylesbury Vale's minority communities, to inform engagement, service planning and delivery.

4   Develop 3rd party reporting centres where people who have experienced hate crime may go for assistance. This includes crime related to a persons disability, sexuality, ethnicity and faith.

5   Maintain properties to Government's decent homes standard.

6   Work together to ensure that any BME residential concentrations have links to and with the wider community.

7   Explore the potential for a 'communities of interest' approach to engagement which would also act as an aid to cohesion. This would allow people from different and diverse backgrounds to work together towards a common interest or goal, or develop solutions to local problems [12].

8   Examine the support networks available to disadvantaged groups, for example homeless households, and explore how these may be improved.

9   Gain a clearer understanding of the factors which contribute to economic disadvantage in rural communities.

> *Intended outcome: To tackle deprivation and disadvantage in the district by removing barriers which may prohibit inclusion and interaction.*

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[12] ICoCo use the example of an environmental project: Support Aylesbury Vale's Environment to illustrate how this approach can be used to good effect.

Priority 3:   **Activities and facilities for young people also addressing any intergenerational tensions**

School census statistics for primary schools in the Vale show that in 2008, 16% of pupils belonged to BME groups. However, 75% of the Vale's children attend schools which are less ethnically diverse, limiting opportunities for social contact and interactions between different ethnic groups. The projected age profile for the Vale indicates an ageing population with a decline in the numbers of young people.

Focus groups which informed the ICoCo review identified relationships between young people as one of the most important issues affecting cohesion. Participants highlighted incidents of name calling, and tensions and conflicts between different groups which had sometimes spilled over into schools. Older people expressed the wish to engage with young people and to teach them about their culture and history.

Key Challenges:

> - *Building positive relationships between young people from different ethnicities and geographical locations within the Vale to avoid the potential for conflict.*
> - *Creating opportunities for older people and young people to establish relationships with each other to challenge stereotypes and myths.*

Proposed actions to address key challenges:

1.   Create further opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to interact.

2   Prioritise activities which offer the opportunity for different generations to engage with each other.

3   Monitor and review the number of racist incidents recorded in schools and ensure that schools are supported to address all forms of bullying, racism, homophobia and religious harassment.

4   Identify potential areas of tension or conflict and develop mechanisms for resolving conflict.

5   Ensure youth forums actively encourage and engage with young people from diverse backgrounds.

6   Review procedures for gathering and sharing information on tension monitoring between communities to ensure that this information can be used to prevent incidents.

> *Intended outcome: To encourage communities to come together to share and celebrate their interests, their experiences, their culture and their beliefs. To foster strong and positive relationships at work, at school and in our neighbourhoods.*

Priority 4:   **Empowering and modernising the voluntary and community sector**

Aylesbury Vale has a vibrant voluntary and community sector, though this has traditionally been stronger in the rural areas.

Voluntary, community and faith sectors are the building blocks for cohesion through promoting meaningful interaction at a local level. This sector has the potential to

develop cohesion by bringing together different generations, different ethnic groups or those working within the equality and diversity agenda , as well as rural and urban communities. This would promote an environment whereby understanding and co-operation between diverse groups, who share similar interests or objectives, could be fostered.

Interfaith groups appear to be active in Aylesbury Vale, encouraging understanding and dialogue between people from different ethnic and social groups, and faiths.

Key challenges:

- *Avoiding the risk of 'parallel structures' arising when groups establish organisations for their particular community which mirror existing 'mainstream' voluntary or community groups and leads to competition for funding.*
- *Supporting the voluntary and community sector in promoting integration and cohesion.*
- *Ensuring engagement and representation from the faith sectors within Aylesbury Vale.*
- *Monitor the success of the county wide Compact[13] in achieving its intended outcomes and negotiate any required changes.*

Proposed actions to address key challenges:

1.   Further develop opportunities for joint working between voluntary and community sector organisations, to avoid competition over resources and duplication of work.

2.   Support and encourage the interfaith forums active within Aylesbury Vale, and explore the potential for faith representation on the Aylesbury Vale Local Strategic Partnership.

3.   Raise awareness of community cohesion opportunities within the voluntary and community sector through existing forums and training opportunities.

4.   Monitor engagement of voluntary / community sector on strategic forums, giving that sector a voice in important forums and improve what is communicated to and from communities.

5.   Develop opportunities for the voluntary, community and inter-faith sectors to contribute towards building community cohesion.

6.   Promote volunteering and local funding opportunities for community based projects.

7.   Ensure grants criteria reflect community cohesion objectives.

Intended outcome: To sustain and grow a thriving community sector, encouraging community participation and engagement.

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[13] The countywide 'Compact' is a way of working together across public bodies and voluntary groups. It aims to boost service quality, relationships, partnership effectiveness and involvement in achieving priorities

7. Delivering the vision

To address the priorities identified in this strategy all partners need to continue to work closely together and with local communities. Promoting cohesion must become a core responsibility when planning and delivering services. This does not mean that service areas will need to develop new activities but rather adjust existing practices to aid cohesion.

To be successful the following actions are proposed**:**

1. *The Community Cohesion Strategy will be adopted by the Aylesbury Vale Local Strategic Partnership.*
2. *A delivery group will be established to develop and monitor a delivery plan.*
3. *A detailed programme development/ delivery plan agreed and implemented.*
4. *Partners to be encouraged to include the local shared vision for community cohesion in their corporate documents and plans.*
5. *Ensure that partner service areas have a positive impact on cohesion.*
6. *Community cohesion progress measurement and management agreed*
7. *Community cohesion will be regularly monitored using a range of indicators. The information gathered will be used to update and report upon the success of the delivery plan.*

8. Measuring Community Cohesion

There are three sets of indicators that will help set a benchmark for current levels of community cohesion and enable us to measure change and improvement.

Community feedback - survey data which identifies people's perceptions of community harmony, safety and decision making.

Deprivation measures – national statistics which indicate the extent to which people experience economic and social inequality.

Crime and other incident tracking – which includes hate crime, graffiti, dumping of waste, abandoned cars, noisy neighbours, indicate the level of anti-social or intolerant behaviour.

To improve the usefulness of data collection and monitoring the following actions are proposed:

- Review the way data is collated and whether there is a need to extend or adjust data collection and analysis.

- Improve accessibility of statistical information amongst partners to inform service planning and delivery.

- Understand the different routes through which anti-social or intolerant behaviour is reported, examine any indications of under-reporting.

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –WORK PROGRAMME 2013-2014

Date of meeting	Item	Scrutiny Indicator *	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
13/2/2013, 26/3/2013, 12/6/2013, 18/9/2013	'Scoping' forms appraisal		Committee	To review 'scoping' forms submitted on any of the other issues identified at the work programme event held on 25/10/2012 that are not already being scoped		TBA
12/6/2013	County Health agenda	5	Committee	To look at the work of the healthy communities partnership, what role AVDC will likely have, and what contribution this Committee can make to overall health aims?	TBA	Cabinet Member for Environment and Health
12/6/2013, 18/9/2013	Vale of Aylesbury Plan – Development Management policies	4	Cabinet Member	To identify the involvement scrutiny wish to have in the preparation of DM policies (Roger Newall)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member and Officers	Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning
12/6/2013, 18/9/2013, 6/11/2013	Research group reports	1, 4	Committee	Subject to agreement on 13/2/2013, to receive report(s) of Research Groups for discussion & consideration of any recommendation(s)		
18/9/2013	Quarterly Performance Digest	2	Cabinet	To review performance against Corporate Plan objectives (within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee)	To identify issues that might benefit from future scrutiny / Member involvement	As indicated in QPD

* Scrutiny Indicator Key

1: Holding to account	**2**: Performance management	**3**: Policy review	**4**: Policy development	**5**: External scrutiny

E1

Date of meeting	Item	Scrutiny Indicator *	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
18/9/2013	Audit of leisure facilities	2	Committee	To review facilities (commercial and Council) for needs / growth and gaps in provision (Lesley Davies)	To identify issues that might benefit from future scrutiny / Member involvement	Cabinet Member for Leisure
18/9/2013	Farming and wildlife	3	Committee	Review – subject to agreement of 'scoping' form (Lesley Davies)	To identify issues that might benefit from future scrutiny / Member involvement	Cabinet Member for Leisure
6/11/2013	Cycling and Pedestrian safety	2, 3	Committee	Review of cycle lanes in/out of Aylesbury & across the rest of the District, (could also look to include the issues of signage, street furniture and street marking identified by the Committee)		Cabinet Member for Planning, Design and Conservation
6/11/2013	Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy	3	Cabinet	To comment on the new policy prior to it being submitted to Cabinet and Council	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Community Matters.
6/11/2013	AVDC Community cohesion and Integration Strategy	2	Committee	To look at the Strategy (adapting our Diversity Strategy), finding ways to improve communication specifically with regard to crime and democratic involvement		Cabinet Member for Community Matters

* Scrutiny Indicator Key

1: Holding to account	**2**: Performance management	**3**: Policy review	**4**: Policy development	**5**: External scrutiny

E2

Date of meeting	Item	Scrutiny Indicator *	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
16/12/2013	Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust	1, 2	Committee	Review of performance against the Housing Stock Transfer agreement promises	To make recommendations to VAHT and the Cabinet Member.	Cabinet Member for Community Matters
16/12/2013	Thames Valley Police	1, 2	Committee	Review latest re. crime and disorder & community safety		Cabinet Member for Community Matters
12/2/2014	No items as yet					
25/3/2014	No items as yet					
11/6/2014	No items as yet					
22/9/2014	No items as yet					
5/11/2014	No items as yet					
9/12/2014	No items as yet					

* Scrutiny Indicator Key

1: Holding to account	**2**: Performance management	**3**: Policy review	**4**: Policy development	**5**: External scrutiny

Items taken forward from Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee meeting on 25 October 2012   **Appendix 1**

Environment (sustainability)
- Farming and wildlife
- AVDC to be the business providing: loft insulation, solar PV, solar hot water heat pumps (possibly!) (large scale discounts – mass community involvement if AVDC is driving, <u>trust</u> of AVDC) (Councillor Vick scoping for 13/2/2013 meeting)
- Strategies for energy saving (how much energy are we using?)

Land Use / Transportation(AVDC policy re. physical development)
- GPS3 (how applied to structures e.g. wind turbines)
- Gypsy and traveller sites

Planning and Design Services
- Better conservation area street furniture and signage
- Examining the potential for a local list of buildings not 'listable' but of historic / local interest (looking into the potential for community involvement to identify such a list) (Councillor Cashman scoping for 13/2/2013 meeting)
- Looking at present provision for Town and Parish Council planning training? How effective is this? (training for Clerks)
- Review enforcement in the Vale (strengths and weaknesses)

Housing
- AVDC being the developer (full spectrum of housing)
- Bucks Home Choice (submitted to Committee, 20 November 2012)

Environmental Health
- County Health agenda
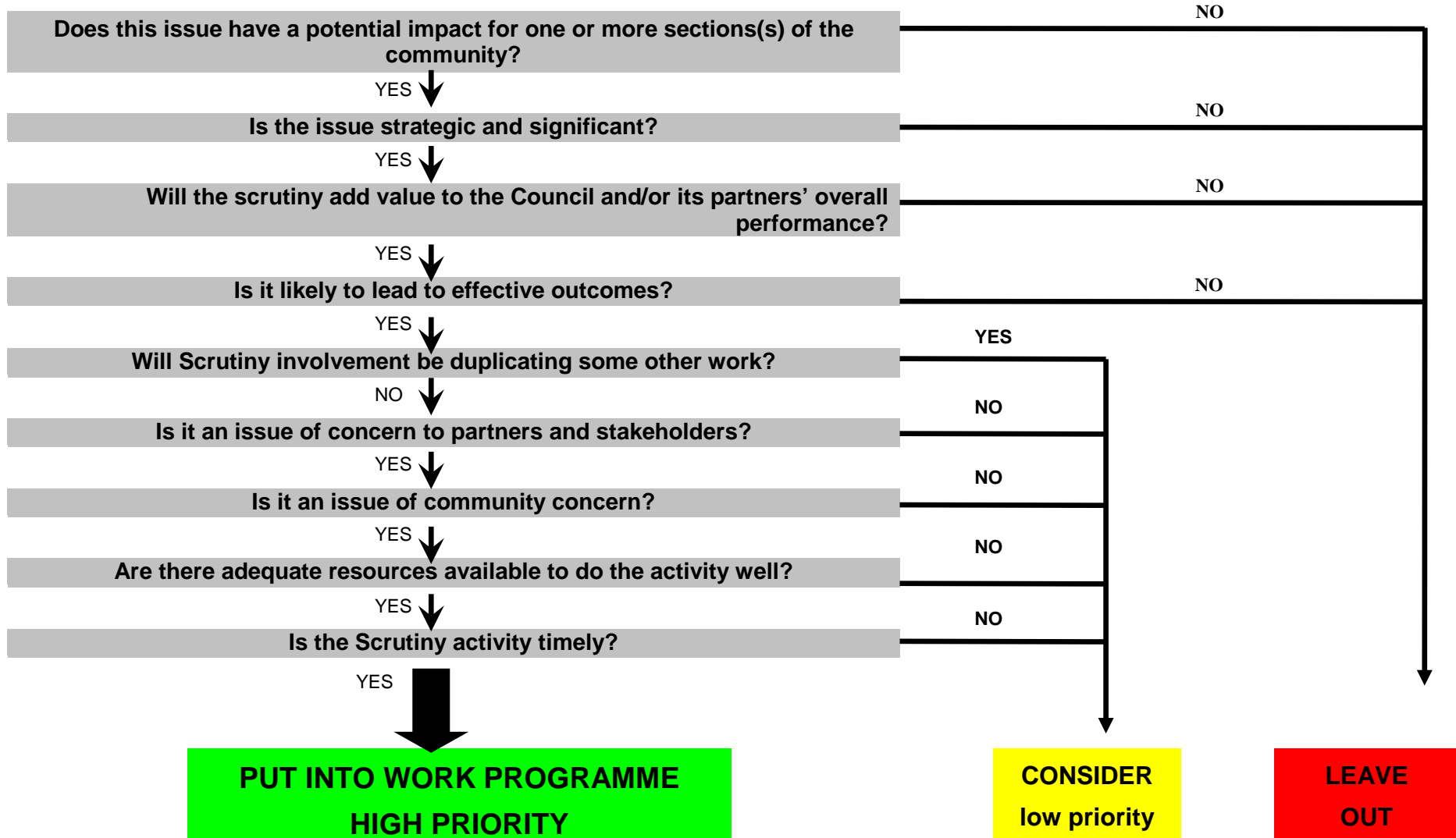
Crime and Disorder / Community Safety
- Cycling safety (cycle lanes in/out of Aylesbury)
- Community Cohesion Strategy (adapting our Diversity Strategy, finding ways to improve communication specifically with regard to crime and democratic involvement)

Leisure
- Audit of facilities (commercial and Council) for needs / growth and gaps in provision

Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more sections(s) of the community? — NO →

YES ↓

Is the issue strategic and significant? — NO →

YES ↓

Will the scrutiny add value to the Council and/or its partners' overall performance? — NO →

YES ↓

Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes? — NO →

YES ↓

Will Scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work? — YES →

NO ↓

Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders? — NO →

YES ↓

Is it an issue of community concern? — NO →

YES ↓

Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well? — NO →

YES ↓

Is the Scrutiny activity timely? — NO →

YES ↓

PUT INTO WORK PROGRAMME

HIGH PRIORITY

CONSIDER

low priority

LEAVE

OUT

E5

Review topic – outline scope of issue   **Appendix 3**

Purpose of the review	
Review membership	
Background	1-2 short paragraphs of the background, leading up to the Scrutiny Committee wishing to review this issue
Key questions for the review to ask	? ? ? ?
Resources	Both in terms of Officer time, Member time, and of witnesses / public who might be asked to participate in the review
Out of scope	What the review IS NOT looking at, although this might be of interest.
Anticipated outcomes	What are Members hoping to achieve during the review (it might also be helpful to identify the people to whom any recommendations might be presented.
Outline timetable	Of meeting dates and Officers / witnesses that the review would like to speak to, or evidence that Members would like to consider