

# Public Document Pack



## AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Democratic Services

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3 February 2016

### ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee will be held at **6.30 pm** on **Thursday 11 February 2016** in **The Olympic Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF**, when your attendance is requested.

**Membership:** Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), P Agoro, M Bateman, A Bond, S Chapple, A Cole, S Cole, B Everitt, B Foster and A Hetherington

Contact Officer for meeting arrangements: Charlotte Gordon; [cgordon@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk](mailto:cgordon@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk);

### AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES**

**2. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**

Any changes will be reported at the meeting.

**3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 8)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015, copy attached an Appendix.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members to declare any interests.

**5. ENCOURAGING THE USE OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES (Pages 9 - 32)**

**6. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING (Pages 33 - 44)**

**7. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REGENERATION POLICY (Pages 45 - 70)**

**8. WORK PROGRAMME**



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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

## Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee

8 DECEMBER 2015

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), M Bateman, A Bond, S Chapple, A Cole, S Cole, B Everitt and A Hetherington

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors T Hunter-Watts

### 1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE UPDATE

The Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from the Community Safety Manager who gave an update on Domestic Violence and Abuse in Aylesbury Vale. It was noted that domestic violence was underreported. It was estimated that a person would be the victim of an average of thirty five incidents of domestic violence before making an official complaint. Buckinghamshire County Council led on domestic violence, and employed a Domestic Violence Coordinator. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) were also available to assist victims through the court process.

One Councillor questioned whether there was budget sharing between the authorities regarding preventative work. The ongoing cost of the effect of domestic violence was huge and impacted on many service areas. Reducing the demand on these services by investing in preventative measures could lead to future savings. It was noted that there was no calculation regarding investment in prevention, but that strategies highlighting risk areas were developed. The Police and Crime Commissioner funds most of the work. Aylesbury Vale District Council would contribute to services within the district, and would also take part in awareness raising campaigns. Council employees would be made aware of warning signs of domestic violence, as many services areas interacted with members of the public.

It was questioned whether the Fresh Start initiative could be considered a success. Councillors were advised that the scheme was being evaluated. Officers would ask that Buckinghamshire County Council Officers share the results of the evaluation with the scrutiny committee.

Support was available for victims of domestic violence and abuse. IDVAs would support victims before the trial, as a victim may change their mind during the time it may take for a case to be heard in court. It is possible for prosecutions to take place without the testimony of the victim, but it was noted that this was difficult. It was noted that of 637 reported domestic violence cases in Aylesbury Vale since April 2015, 36% had resulted in a positive outcome with the offender being charged. This was higher than the average in the Thames Valley Police Area. 25% of incidents were reported by repeat victims.

Domestic violence and abuse was noted to impact every level of society, and it was not possible to label a particular age, race or social class as being at a higher risk. It was asked whether there was a correlation between domestic violence and drug and alcohol

use and Councillors were advised that there was no evidence that drug or alcohol use caused domestic violence.

In cases where a victim decides not to prosecute the individual would remain on the police radar. Information and evidence would be retained, and this included footage from police body worn cameras. Victims would also be referred to partner organisations. Work was also undertaken to contact hard to reach groups. Women's Aid employed an outreach worker from the Asian community to carry out work with the Mosque.

Children were often present in homes where there were incidents of domestic violence, and it was noted that, if they were at risk of harm, they may be removed from the home by the police. Any incidents where children were present would also be reported to Buckinghamshire County Council. Children taken away from their homes may be placed into care, and may suffer ongoing emotional problems.

The Citizens Advice Bureaus in Aylesbury and Buckingham reported that a number of domestic violence and abuse victims also had financial and housing problems. It was questioned whether Aylesbury Vale District Council had been correct to reduce the grant given to these organisations. The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Communities and Civic Amenities advised the committee that it had been a difficult decision to reduce the grant. The two organisations had been asked to look at working more closely together to achieve economies. It was noted that both Citizen Advice Bureaus had applied to the Aylesbury Vale Lottery for funding.

RESOLVED:

That the Domestic Violence and Abuse update be noted.

#### **4. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE 2015**

Members received a report providing information about current crime levels in Aylesbury Vale, a summary of activity on the delivery of the Aylesbury Community Safety Partnership (AVCSP) Plan in 2015/16 and an update on some of the recent and future changes taking place in connection with community safety. Chief Inspector Neil Kentish was in attendance at the meeting.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 required Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership to produce a three year partnership strategy and annual action plans to achieve the priorities set in the strategy. The Committee noted that the current strategy (2014-2017) had two key priorities, which were;

- (i) Safe and secure town centres
- (ii) To reduce ASB and crimes that are of most concern to the public and to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

Several projects had taken place in 2015/16, including supporting the Thames Valley Police campaign #consentiseverything, which likens consent to a cup of tea, Chelsea's Choice, a play about how a young girl becomes the victim of child sexual exploitation (CSE), and R U Safe, which would follow the play to give practical advice to young people with concerns about themselves or friends. In addition to this, Aylesbury town centre had applied to renew its Purple Flag status relating to its night time economy, which it had held since 2010. A waste amnesty project had also been carried out alongside the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, which aimed to raise awareness about fly tipping and contaminated waste. Councillors were advised that there were several upcoming projects, including the annual wintertime burglary campaign, which would run through to January 2016. The Community Safety Partnership would also be launching the Barnardo's 'Say Something' campaign, which aimed to raise the awareness of local

businesses about how to spot risk factors associated with CSE and what to do if they suspect CSE related activity. The Community Safety Partnership would also be working with housing providers to raise awareness of partners about e-safety by arranging some session for tenants.

The Committee were advised that the new community safety action plan for 2016/17 was being drafted and would be in place by 1 April 2016. A strategic assessment (2014-15) identified that the points of the strategy currently in place were still valid. It was noted that violent crime accounted for 20% of all reported crime in Aylesbury Vale, which was an increase of 6% on the previous year. Sexual offences rose by 36% compared with the previous year. 5% of all crime in Aylesbury Vale took place in Aylesbury town centre. 24% of the crime in the town centre was violence related and primarily occurred at the weekends between 1 and 4am. Emerging areas of crime included Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of exploitation such as slavery. Work was being undertaken to help the partnership understand the scale of these crimes in Aylesbury Vale.

Crime figures had been falling annually in the Vale for the last few years however it was noted that the number of crimes recorded had increased 2015/16. This had been expected, as the way in which crimes were recorded had changed. There had been an increase in violent offenses, but it was noted that this rise was particularly caused by incidents at Aylesbury Youth Offenders Institute and the Whiteleaf Centre. There was an increase in thefts from motor vehicle comparing the year to date with the previous year. However, since one offender was caught, incidents had decreased and it was possible that there would be no overall rise in incidents for the year as a whole. There was also a rise in reporting of serious sexual assault. It was noted that there was still an increase in reporting of historic crimes.

Councillors stated that in villages where there was little crime, PCSOs were not attending Parish meeting. It was noted that the fear of crime in villages was higher than the risk of crime, and that the vast majority of incidents occurred in Aylesbury and it was necessary to ensure that Officers were stationed in areas where crime occurred. Thames Valley Police remained committed to Neighbourhood Policing, and there were no plans to decrease the number of Police in villages.

A community trigger had been received following anti-social behaviour stemming from a residential home for young people in Fairford Leys, which had led to a review. It was noted that since the conclusion of the review, there were still reports of anti-social behaviour, and it was asked when another community trigger could be launched. It was noted that a lot of the anti-social behaviour was noise related, and that the police had not received a report of anti-social behaviour since October 2015. It was stated that the use of a Closure Order was not suitable for this case, and that it was important that the noise issues were dealt with. It was asked that residents address complaints to Benjamin UK and also send them to the Community Safety Team at the Council. Meetings were still ongoing with Benjamin UK, and it was noted that a letter had been sent from Environmental Health regarding the noise complaints.

Mediation had been offered to residents as an outcome of the review, and Benjamin UK had offered to be involved in the mediation sessions. Work was also ongoing with county placements to ensure that Buckinghamshire County Council was matching children correctly. It was noted that the residential homes also housed children from outside of Buckinghamshire.

CCTV made a positive contribution to Aylesbury town centre, and it was noted that there was a lot of interaction between the CCTV personnel and Police Officers on duty. A review was being undertaken, and there was a possibility that the CCTV control room may be relocated to Milton Keynes. This review was being undertaken as a result of

budget pressures, and was looking to see whether there were more efficient ways of working. Interaction with Police would still be possible if the monitoring of the CCTV moved location. Street Angels, Pub watch and Shop watch were also in touch with the monitoring team regularly.

Members were informed that there were three Neighbourhood Action Groups in operation across the Aylesbury Vale. It was noted that, while the Buckingham Neighbourhood Action Group was well attended and was affective, neither the Wing nor the Aylesbury West Neighbourhood Action Group were well attended and were therefore not very effective. Councillors and members of the public were welcome to attend the meetings of the groups.

It was stated that the PCSOs in the Vale did a good job. A coffee morning was held in Fairford Leys at the Community Centre, but it may be more beneficial if it were held at the weekend occasionally. It was important to keep a PCSO presence in rural areas. It was noted that there was also good contact with the Neighbourhood Watch.

The Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee extended their thanks to Chief Inspector Neil Kentish for attending the meeting, and

RESOLVED

That the Community Safety Partnership Update 2015 be noted.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee considered the work programme, and

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

# Domestic Violence and Abuse in Buckinghamshire

Teresa Martin & Faye Blunstone




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## What is Domestic Violence?



- 'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional




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## DVA Strategy 2015-2018:



Coordinated Community Response	To continue to support, develop and implement the Coordinated Community Response
Safety, Support and Harm Reduction	To improve the victim journey by identifying gaps, areas of good practice and improve the victim experience with our partnership services
Prevention and Early Intervention	<p>To support the safeguarding agenda and continue to enhance the current training and awareness raising to ensure that professionals and the public are well informed.</p> <p>To support, encourage and provide information to children, young people and families around healthy relationships and to provide services to those who have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse. To ensure that those who are vulnerable are supported appropriately.</p> <p>This priority has three sections:</p> <p>A) Training of Professionals B) Children and Young adults C) Adults</p>
Local Communities	To engage with communities at a local level, including those who are harder to reach to ensure they are getting the services they need and that communities are equipped to help




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## How big is the issue?



- 7,687 incidents of DVA reported to TVP (7,454 in 2013/2014)
- 2,616 Aylesbury Vale

Tip of the iceberg.....

- Based on a female population of 256,937, estimated 16,958 females experienced DVA in the past year
- Estimated 10% of victims high risk = 1,695
- In Aylesbury Vale, based on a female population of 87,896 this equates to 5,659 female victims of DVA in the past year




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## Demand for services in Aylesbury Vale:



	2014/2015		
	Clients	Children	
IDVA	342	492	
Male IDVA	16		
Outreach	235	390	
Freedom Programme	99	124	
Counselling	39		
Refuge	71	74	* 30%
Helping Hands	19	32	




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## Costs of DVA in Bucks:



The cost of services DV and SV in an area with this population size

These figures show the estimated cost of domestic and sexual violence in an area of this size. The figures do not include additional costs from stalking, female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based violence, and forced marriage.

	Total costs (not including human and emotional costs)	Physical and mental health care costs	Criminal justice costs	Social services costs	Other costs (incl. housing, child care & employment costs)	Human and emotional costs
Domestic and Sexual Violence	£ 48,261,801	£ 10,399,691	£ 6,550,408	£ 1,233,569	£ 30,077,934	£ 154,089,485

The costs for local areas are derived from the national estimates of cost published by Järvinen et al (2008), and given by the proportion of the national population resident in your area. The HM Treasury GDP deflator multiplier of 1.136 has been used to bring the costs up to 2008/09 levels. More details on the services included in each category can be found in Waddy (2004).




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What can Members do?



- Assist in promoting DVA messages on social media platforms
- Supporting residents in the community who may be victims and signposting to appropriate services
- DVA Champions



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Any Questions?



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## ENCOURAGING THE USE OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Director – Tracey Aldworth

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform the Committee about the variety of district wide green spaces owned and managed by AVDC, how they are used, and how their usage is actively encouraged.

### 2 Recommendations

- |  |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 That Members note the benefits that quality green spaces provide and the variety of work currently undertaken to maintain, encourage use of and promote such spaces.</li></ol> |
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### 3 Executive summary

- 3.1 This is the first report of this nature and includes work covered by the Community Spaces Team, Historic Buildings Team, and Communities Team.
- 3.2 It highlights the importance of quality green spaces, including the facilities provided within them, events held upon them and how such provision together with promotion encourages their use.

### 4 Introduction

- 4.1 AVDC manage around 190 hectares of green spaces within the district, equivalent to 266 adult football pitches. The majority of these spaces are owned by AVDC, the exceptions being the 6 closed churchyards at Aylesbury (St. Mary's), Buckingham (Hunter Street), Hulcott (All Saints), Marsh Gibbon (St. Mary's), Stoke Mandeville (St. Mary's) & Wing (All Saints).

As well as closed churchyards (see our closed churchyard management plan for further information <http://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/closed-churchyards>) these green spaces include parks, playing fields, children's play areas, woods, meadows, other natural areas and grassed areas.

- 4.2 The approximate distribution of these green spaces within the district is as follows: Aylesbury (79%), Buckingham (12%), Wendover (2.5%), Winslow (2%), Wing (1%), other parishes (3.5%).

### 5 Quality Spaces

- 5.1 The importance of quality, well maintained green spaces as vital community assets essential to the local economy has been widely documented by both former and current national organisations including Heritage Lottery Fund, Fields in Trust, Play England, CABE Space. Likewise so have the detrimental effects of such spaces being poorly maintained and of low quality.
- 5.2 They provide time out from the pressures of everyday life, have a positive effect on peoples mental health and well being and help improve people's physical health by providing places for sport, play and informal recreation.
- 5.3 As communities become increasingly mixed and diverse, and the population increases then green spaces provide one of the most important social spaces in a neighbourhood where residents, workers, and visitors can rest, meet friends and family, and hold events.

- 5.4 The economic competitiveness of a region can be enhanced, investors attracted, plus skilled workers and their families attracted and retained due to such spaces improving their quality of life.
- 5.5 According to Visit Britain, of the 31 million tourists visiting Britain, over a third enjoy visiting a park or garden, making it one of the most popular tourist activities (ranking higher than visiting a museum, castle, historic house or art gallery).
- 5.6 Green infrastructure complements the engineered 'grey' infrastructure and if properly planned can improve the resilience of neighbourhoods to the impact of climate change.
- 5.7 They provide places to accommodate and improve the biodiversity of an area, which in turn can improve the attractiveness and appeal of a space, having a positive effect on people's feelings of wellbeing.
- 5.8 Good maintenance standards are essential in ensuring quality spaces remain as such. Our joint horticulture and street cleansing contractors John O'Conner and SITA UK carry out the day to day maintenance of all AVDC managed green spaces. The joint contract which commenced on 21 January 2013 is due to run until 2020 and operates to ISO standards for Environmental Management (ISO 14001) and Quality Management (ISO 9001). Relevant works include:
  - grass cutting
  - management and maintenance of sports grounds
  - safety inspections and maintenance of play areas
  - maintenance of planted areas and hedges
  - tree works
  - site cleansing

## **6 Encouraging Use**

- 6.1 Our Supplementary Planning Guidance for Sport and Leisure Facilities and its companion document the Ready Reckoner detail the type of sport and leisure facilities that should be provided per development or settlement size. A number of these facilities (e.g. play areas, skate parks and sports pitches) are often sited within parks and open spaces.

The provision of such facilities or improvements made to them encourages use of the facility and greater use of the park and open space as a whole by both new and existing residents; not only due to the improved facility, but also through any engagement process carried out beforehand with the relevant users and stakeholders, including ward Members.

Examples of such engagement include:

- 2015 Vale Park (Aylesbury Central) new skate park installed. Skate park user group contributed to the design brief.
  - 2005 - 2013 Over 30 play areas improved (district wide). Local school pupils and residents consulted and their preferred play experiences contributed to design briefs.
- 6.2 The following lists the locations of hireable sports facilities located within our parks or open spaces, thereby encouraging usage of the wider space.

- Alfred Rose Park (Elmhurst) – Cricket pitch
- Bedgrove Park (Bedgrove) – Grass football pitches
- Edinburgh Playing Fields (Southcourt) – Grass football pitches
- Fairford Leys Playing Fields (Coldharbour) – Grass football pitches
- Meadowcroft open space (Riverside) – Grass football & synthetic pitch
- Vale Park (Aylesbury Central) – 3G synthetic football 5-a-side pitches
- Walton Court Playing Fields (Walton Court & Hawkslade) – Grass football pitch

Excluding Vale Park's synthetic pitches (managed by Aqua Vale Leisure Centre) there has been a 3 year average of 1,545 games played per year attracting an average of 33,997 players per year (includes repeat users). See appendix 1 for a more detailed breakdown.

6.3 Improving existing or providing new access routes to and through our green spaces also enables and encourages greater use of them. Examples include:

- 2015 – 2013 Riverside Walk (Riverside) footpath improvements - Providing a suitable site for the national weekly parkrun event.
- 2015 The Paddock (Bedgrove) new bridge & footpath - Providing a much shorter and attractive wheelchair accessible route across Bedgrove Brook to The Paddock open space and play area.
- 2015 Alfred Rose Park (Elmhurst) footpath improvements - Making existing footpaths safer for users throughout the park.
- 2015 Heartlands (Buckingham South) footpath improvements - Macadam of existing failing compressed stone path.
- 2015 Walton Court Playing Fields (Walton Court & Hawkslade) footpath improvements - Widening and linking the existing route to Edinburgh Playing Fields.
- 2014 Edinburgh Playing Fields(Southcourt) footpath improvements - Reinstating a footpath that fell into disrepair in order to provide a continuous hard surfaced route through to Walton Court.
- 2014 Whitehill Park (Gatehouse) footpath and landscape improvements - Improving path surfaces and making the site more attractive and welcoming.

6.4 There are a variety of licensed events that are run on AVDC parks and open spaces (see appendix 2), which range from weekly 'fitness bootcamps' to large scale events such as fun fairs or Park Life (Aylesbury Town Council). The most requested park for events is Vale Park (Aylesbury Central) due to it's proximity to the town centre and surrounding population, closely followed by Fairford Leys (Coldharbour) and Cottesloe Green (Mandeville & Elm Farm). Outside of Aylesbury, there has been a steady rise in the number of events and activities taking place on land in Buckingham, especially on the skate park which is seen as a key location to engage with young people.

6.5 The Communities Team support a number of projects which take place in AVDC parks and open spaces. One of the most successful being the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) project. This project utilises surfaced ball courts situated in open spaces to run free sports activities for children and young people, to encourage use of the facilities available. The sessions run over

seven weeks and are free of charge to attend. Sports include basketball, dodgeball, cricket, and tennis. Coaches hosting these sessions encourage participants wishing to continue that sport to join local clubs. In 2015 we had over 300 attendances at the sessions.

- 6.6 Sportivate is a Sport England funding programme that seeks to encourage children and young people aged 11 – 25 years to play sport. Each summer a number of sports projects are arranged at key parks to help reduce anti social behaviour in some areas. In 2015 we ran two rugby sessions at Alfred Rose Park and Walton Court open space, and a basketball session in Vale Park, all in Aylesbury during the summer holidays and had 50 participants attend sessions.
- 6.7 There are a number of AVDC supported volunteer conservation groups that carryout activities on AVDC open spaces that attract around 200 visits to carry out work (including repeat users) per year.
- 6.8 The Vale Countryside Volunteers (VCV) have provided essential practical conservation experience on sites such as Heartlands in Buckingham, Magpie Spinney in Winslow, Riverside Walk in Aylesbury and Walnut Tree Meadow in Wendover. Tasks have involved wild flower meadow establishment, wildlife friendly hedge laying, and tree planting. In all these cases local community groups have been invited fostering local ownership of projects.
- 6.9 The North Bucks Bat Group, Bucks Owl and Raptor Group, and Buckingham Railway Walk Group carryout a number of tasks at Railway walk in Buckingham. Berks, Bucks, & Oxen Wildlife Trust have designated this site as a Local Wildlife Site with community conservation projects assisting in the management of this busy pedestrian transit route through the town.

## **7 Promotion**

- 7.1 Local residents are initially made aware of major park or open space improvement projects through our engagement process, which may be via articles in publications (e.g. Aylesbury Vale Times, Aylesbury Town Matters), letters to residents, emails to established resident groups (e.g. Bedgrove Residents & Community Association) or school presentations. All of which invite responses which we take on board and respond to accordingly. Resident groups are increasingly using social media (e.g. Facebook) which engages more people and can increase response rates.
- 7.2 If such projects proceed, then once completed, press releases are issued and official openings organised to which the ward Members, user groups, stakeholders (e.g. Town/Parish Council, PCSO's, contractors, external funders) and local media (e.g. Bucks Herald, Buckingham & Winslow Advertiser, Mix 96) are invited. The projects are promoted through the local media (e.g. appendix 3 & 4), AVDC and stakeholder publications, websites and social media pages.
- 7.3 Ongoing promotion of our individual parks and play areas is via our website <http://www.aylesburyvalecdc.gov.uk/section/parks-and-play-areas> and we also produce a 'where's your nearest play area' flyer which is displayed in park noticeboards and included in relevant publications. (see appendix 5).
- 7.4 The use of our hireable sports facilities are promoted by the various sporting clubs and leagues, and also via AVDC's, our contractors John O'Conner's & Everyone Active's websites. Our pitches can be booked online via our contractors website.

- 7.5 Vale Countryside Volunteers' website (<http://www.vcv.org.uk>) promotes their activities and they also produce a flyer (see appendix 6) which is distributed in local outlets. The North Bucks Bat, Bucks Owl and Raptor, and Buckingham Railway Walk groups support events such as the Bat, Barn Owl and Newt walks which promotes Buckingham's Railway Walk to local residents.
- 7.6 AVDC Ecologist Paul Holton maintains responsibility for linking up conservation organisations with local community groups on AVDC open spaces. An example of this joint work will be demonstrated at The Coppice open space in Aylesbury during February 2016. A work party of local residents will be forming to further establish the wildflower meadow and establish a dead hedge, the latter bringing habitat enhancement to the area along with improving access. Further projects are planned throughout the year and will be promoted within the community groups the area covers.

## **8 National Campaigns**

AVDC actively support a number of national campaigns that help to promote use of our parks and open spaces.

- 8.1 The Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag Award scheme is the national benchmark for parks and open spaces in the UK, recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country.

A Green Flag Award can generate excellent publicity for a community. Both the media and the public are becoming increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space, which can only be a boost to its popularity and local economy.

Bedgrove and Vale Parks are both current flyers of the Green Flag, a good indication that the sites management and our district wide maintenance contract specification is of notable quality. Both sites are entered annually through the submission of detailed management plans which are available to view via our website (currently being updated).

The Green Flag ceremonies have been held at Vale Park and Bedgrove Park with the flags being raised by the Chairman and attended by all involved in contributing to the quality of the sites, as well as local media (see appendix 7).

Promotion of Aylesbury's Green Flag Awards isn't just limited to the local press, it is also publicised by national organisations and publications such as BALI (British Association of Landscape Industries), Pro Landscaper and Horticulture Weekly.

- 8.2 Love Parks Week is a national initiative about protecting, improving and promoting green spaces and is managed by Keep Britain Tidy. It raises awareness of the importance of parks and green spaces throughout the year with an official week of events taking place in July. These events encourage residents to enjoy and explore their local parks and open spaces. AVDC supports the initiative by running free family events in parks and open spaces across Aylesbury and Buckingham. Events have included fun days with sports activities, bouncy castles, orienteering, fishing, pond dipping and arts & crafts. In 2015 we had over 150 children attend such events.
- 8.3 'Play in the Park' has been held at Vale Park since 2007 and coincides with National Play Day. Play day 2015 (Mix 96 Play Day) - was sponsored by Mix 96 (Aylesbury's local radio station) and was supported by 30 public and

commercial organisations from across the district including RSPB, Heart Beeps, Youth for Christ, and Green Park. The day aims to encourage and develop family play and provide a unique day of activities and entertainment for children aged 3 to 12 years to celebrate National Play Day. Over 3,500 people attended the event with survey results showing that 38% said it was excellent and 54% saying it was good.

8.4 Parkrun is an entirely volunteer led and marshalled worldwide initiative which requires some start up support from local authorities. They are open to everyone, free of charge, and safe and easy to take part in. AVDC helped to set up a total of five parkruns which take place every weekend at:

- Riverside Walk/Buckingham Park (Riverside). Adult 5 kilometres
- Meadowcroft (Riverside). Junior 2 kilometres
- Heartlands & Bourton Park (Buckingham North & South). Adult 5 kilometres
- Bourton Park (Buckingham North). Junior 2 kilometres
- Rushmere Country Park (Great Brickhill & Newton Longville). Adult 5 kilometres

Between January and December 2015, 18,046 people attended the five parkruns. Our sites are promoted via the parkrun website, see <http://www.parkrun.org.uk>.

## **9 Future requirements and improvements to further encourage usage**

9.1 A copy of the Improvement Plan (2015/16 – 2017/18) taken from our Parks & Open Spaces Management, Recent Work & Accreditations Report (Environment & Living Scrutiny Committee 11 February 2015) can be found in appendix 8 and details our future work programme which includes, but is not restricted to:

- Alfred Rose Park (Elmhurst) – create and implement improvement masterplan (incl. play area replacement & relocation, access/footpath improvements, additional seating, improve visibility into park, consider lighting)
- Bedgrove Park (Bedgrove) – Create and implement improvement masterplan (consider circumnavigation path, additional seating/bins, Bedgrove Brook improvements)
- Bowlers Field (Gatehouse) - park creation feasibility study
- Bridge Street (Buckingham South) - new skate park
- Closed Churchyards – resolves issues at Hulcott, structural testing of brick pillars at St. Mary's, Aylesbury, and implement memorial testing procedures at all sites.
- Embleton Way (Buckingham South) - Implement improvements (incl. pavilion use & play/sports facilities)
- Produce play area replacement programme (District wide)
- Riverside Walk (Riverside) – continue footpath improvements



- Vale Park (Aylesbury Central) - implement continued phased improvements (incl. Additional seating, entrance improvements, Bearbrook access feasibility study)
- Whitehill Park (Gatehouse) – lighting

9.2 There is an endless list that we and site users could produce to improve parks and open spaces in order to further increase usage, however, much of this cannot be delivered without funding.

9.3 In addition and more importantly, where grants can be applied for, these only cover the capital investment and do not provide for the ongoing maintenance and repair costs, which is why we have to be mindful when considering the provision of additional infrastructure or facilities within our parks or open spaces, as they will also increase our maintenance costs and liabilities.

## 10 Evaluation

10.1 The following statistics and statements have been taken from recent surveys and help to show the importance that people place on good quality parks and open spaces:

- Love Parks Week 2014 (Aylesbury & Buckingham sites):  
When asked how often they visited Aylesbury Parks, 77% said every week, 23% said once a month.
- Play in the Park on National Play Day 2014 (Vale Park):  
When asked how often they visited Aylesbury Parks, 43% of respondents said every week, 30% said once a month, 7% said less than once a month and 20% said rarely/never.

10.2 Due to the cost of commissioning external specialist park user surveys we will continue to include such surveys as part of any major AVDC events while taking all opportunities we can to obtain feedback directly from residents and via Ward Members.

## 11 Resource implications

11.1 The delivery of several improvements is dependent upon securing external funding including, S106, Lottery, WREN, SITA Trust, VAHT, etc.

Contact Officer	Joe Houston Ext: 5173
Background Documents	State of UK Public Parks 2014 (The Heritage Lottery Fund 2014)
	Supplementary Planning Guidance for Sport and Leisure Facilities (AVDC 2004)
	Ready Reckoner (AVDC 2005)
	Parks & Open Spaces Management, Recent Work & Accreditations (AVDC Environment & Living Scrutiny Committee Report 11 February 2015).
	AVDC Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)



**Pitch hire: number of games per year**

Type of pitch	No of games in 2013	No of games in 2014	No of games in 2015*
Adult grass	707	642	451
Junior grass	113	96	71
Mini grass	125	168	126
Synthetic 5-a-side**	560	812	480
Synthetic 7-a-side	2	51	69
Synthetic full size	75	54	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,582</b>	<b>1,823</b>	<b>1,231</b>

\* Excluding December figures

\*\* Synthetic 5-a-side pitch use may have declined due to new 3G facility at Vale Park

**Pitch hire: number of participants per year**

Average No of players	Type of pitch	No of games in 2013	Number of players 2013*	No of games in 2014	Number of players 2014*	No of games in 2015	Number of players 2015*
22	Adult grass	707	15,554	642	14,124	451	9,922
12	Junior grass	113	2,486	96	2,112	71	1,562
10	Mini grass	125	2,750	168	3,696	126	2,772
10	Synthetic 5-a-side**	560	12,320	812	17,864	480	10,560
14	Synthetic 7-a-side	2	44	51	1,122	69	1,518
22	Synthetic full size	75	1,650	54	1,188	34	748
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,582</b>	<b>34,804</b>	<b>1,823</b>	<b>40,106</b>	<b>1,231</b>	<b>27,082</b>

\* Includes repeat users

\*\* Synthetic 5-a-side pitch use may have declined due to new 3G facility at Vale Park

Note: Figures for Vale Park 3G pitches have been requested from Aqua Vale, who manage that facility

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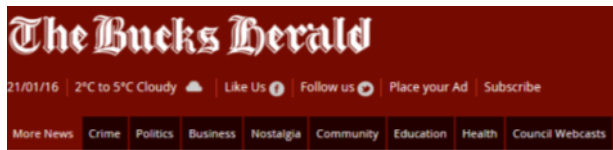
### Schedule of events January - December 2015

Date	Site	Event/activity
Ongoing	Heartlands, Buckingham	Buckingham parkrun
Ongoing	Buckingham Skate Park	Buckingham junior parkrun
Ongoing	Riverside Walk, Aylesbury	Aylesbury parkrun
Ongoing	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	Aylesbury junior parkrun
Ongoing	Rushmere Park,	Rushmere parkrun
Ongoing	Fairford Leys, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Edinburgh Playing Fields, Aylesbury	Buggyfit
Ongoing	Fairford Leys, Aylesbury	Buggyfit
Ongoing	Embleton Way, Buckingham	Brawny's bootcamp
Ongoing	Buckingham Skate Park	BCC Youth Services engagement
02/04/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	NCT Easter egg hunt
03/04/2015 - 06/04/15	Cottesloe Green, Aylesbury	T Smiths funfair
03/05/2015	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Florence Nightingale superhero fun run
08/07/2015 - 08/07/15	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	LEAP family rounders
21/05/15 - 09/07/15	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	LEAP workplace rounders
31/05/2015	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury	Aylesbury's Canal and Park activity day
07/06/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Corpus Christi procession
21/06/2015	Whitehill Park, Aylesbury	Aylesbury Town Council soapbox derby
07/07/15 - 12/07/15	Cottesloe Green, Aylesbury	Chaplin's Circus
08/07/2015	Alfred Rose, Aylesbury	Children's Centre we love the park
09/07/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Equitable Life work rounders
10/07/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	LEAP School Games - netball, rounders, cycling
10/07/2015	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	LEAP School Games - hockey, tri golf
10/07/2015	Fairford Leys, Aylesbury	LEAP School Games - rugby, football
11/07/2015	Calvert Green	Community summer picnic
14/07/15 - 03/09/15	Walton Court Playing Fields	Sportivate rugby diversionary activity
14/07/15 - 03/09/15	Alfred Rose, Aylesbury	Sportivate rugby diversionary activity
25/07/2015	Heartlands, Buckingham	Love Parks Week fun day
26/07/15 - 06/09/15	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Sportivate summer basketball
27/07/2015	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury	Love Parks Week fishing
28/07/2015	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	Love Parks Week weaving and arts
28/07/15 - 29/09/15	Buckingham Skate Park	Young Addaction outreach sessions
29/07/2015	Somerville Way, Aylesbury	Children's Centre we love meeting you
29/07/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Love Parks Week pond dipping
29/07/15 - 31/07/15	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Smith's funfair
31/07/2015	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Love Parks Week celebrations
01/08/2015	Alfred Rose, Aylesbury	Love Parks Week fun day
02/08/2015	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Great British Tennis Week
05/08/2015	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Mix96 play day
29/08/15 - 30/08/15	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Aylesbury Town Council, Park Life
12/09/2015	The Willows, Aylesbury	The Willows flood event
14/09/15 - 26/10/15	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Young Addaction tennis project
08/11/2015	Calvert Green	Calvert Green fireworks

## Schedule of events January 2016 - December 2016

<b>Date</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Event/activity</b>
Ongoing	Heartlands, Buckingham	Buckingham parkrun
Ongoing	Buckingham Skate Park	Buckingham junior parkrun
Ongoing	Riverside Walk, Aylesbury	Aylesbury parkrun
Ongoing	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	Aylesbury junior parkrun
Ongoing	Rushmere Park,	Rushmere parkrun
Ongoing	Fairford Leys, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury	Regiment Fitness bootcamp
Ongoing	Edinburgh Playing Fields, Aylesbury	Buggyfit
Ongoing	Fairford Leys, Aylesbury	Buggyfit
Ongoing	Embleton Way, Buckingham	Brawny's bootcamp
Ongoing	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Bryony Evans Park Fitness
21/03/16 - 29/03/16	Cottesloe Green, Aylesbury	Smith's funfair
02/04/2016	Bedgrove, Aylesbury	NCT Easter egg hunt
16/06/16 - 19/06/16	Walton Court, Aylesbury	Uncle Sam's Circus
11/09/2016	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury /Walnut Tree Meadow, Wendover	Canal and River Trust, Two Arms on Two Legs Half Marathon
June	Whitehill Park, Aylesbury	Aylesbury Town Council soapbox derby
August	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Play Day
August	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Park Life
TBC	TBC	Superhero fun run
TBC	Oakfield Road, Aylesbury	Aylesbury Canal and Park Activity Day
TBC	TBC	Circus Ginnett
TBC	Vale Park, Aylesbury	Smith's funfair
TBC	Meadowcroft, Aylesbury	Smith's funfair

# Vale Park (Aylesbury Central) Skate Park



## £150,000 skatepark revamp 'already making a big difference'



Opening of the newly refurbished skate park in Aylesbury's Vale Park - pictured in action is Cameron Barrett



Cameron, who lives in Watermead and works for Bucks County Council's commercial team, described the sport as a 'positive outlet' for young people.

"It's already made a big difference. There's been lots of new faces. From the few weeks it's been open, we've had people from all over - Hertfordshire, St Albans, Oxford - it's the busiest I've ever seen it."

He praised the work of everyone involved, especially Joe Houston, senior officer for community spaces for the district council.

"They're really pushed it and been really welcoming of our feedback."

"It's not always easy trying to find a solution that works with what everyone wants."

However, Deborah Chew, whose son Lourie is a regular user of the park, raised concerns about certain features.

"Speaking as a parent, there's nowhere for us to sit or for people using the park to put their stuff, and they haven't put lights on it. Some people don't want it being used after dark, but it takes them away from the streets and car parks. The skate park is purpose built, it should have lights and be able to be used."

But she was positive about the refurbishment overall. "It was dead down here, people were bored stupid. Now they love the park and the vibe it's got."

Jenny Bloom, chairman for Aylesbury Vale District Council, who cut the ribbon on the skate park said: "It's great to get young people together like this. It's their thing - this is what they want."



#FreshKicks #NewRoutine #StartsToday

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Sign in

by Mel Beckerleg

editorial@bucks herald.co.uk

published

15:02 Thursday 06 August 2015

Vale Park's refurbished skatepark, which was officially opened yesterday, is already attracting new faces from as far away as Oxford and St Albans.

The new £150,000 course aims to cater for a wider range of abilities and attract new skaters and bikers to the park.

0 comments



HAVE YOUR SAY



Opening of the newly refurbished skate park in Aylesbury's Vale Park - pictured is Cllr Jenny Bloom - chair of AVDC cutting the ribbon

Angela Macpherson, Aylesbury Vale District Council's cabinet member for leisure, communities and civic amenities, said: "This is an exciting new development and it is sure to be a hit with young people on BMXs and skateboards."

Cameron Barrett represented the views of skatepark community to the council. The 21 year old, who has been using the skatepark for ten years, said: "Before the refurbishment it was very dark and didn't cater to a full range of abilities. We wanted to open it up to include more people, and allow them to build their skills for the future."

"It's great to see so many younger kids down here today - hopefully they'll be us in ten years time!"

The new park was constructed with in-situ sprayed concrete, which provides a better riding surface and has lower maintenance costs. The features, including a stair set with handrail, grind wall and boxes, tombstone jump ramp and a wally bar, have been designed to accommodate skate-boarders, BMXers, in-line skaters and scooters.



Opening of the newly refurbished skate park in Aylesbury's Vale Park - pictured is Cllr Jenny Bloom - chair of AVDC with some of the skateboarders who use the park PNL

See: <http://www.bucks herald.co.uk/news/more-news/150-000-skatepark-revamp-already-making-a-big-difference-1-6890034>

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## Bridge Street (Buckingham South) Play Area

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# Kids celebrate new Buckingham playground opening



AVDC Chairman Cllr Michael Rand opens the new Bridge St play area with children from Grenville School.  
131121M-D537



See: <http://www.buckinghamtoday.co.uk/news/more-news/kids-celebrate-new-buckingham-playground-opening-1-5706850>

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# Where's your nearest play area?



**Key >** Teen area/equipment Green Flag Award  
 Ball court  
 Skate park

Postcodes provided are the closest to each play area/open space.

All listed sites contain play areas designed for 2 – 12 year olds



## Aylesbury

### Aylesbury Central

**Vale Park**   
 Park St. HP20 1DX  
 Tennis courts, Good access with toilets and cafe facilities on site.

### Bedgrove

**Bedgrove Park**   
 Ambleside. HP21 9TS  
 Toilets on site.

**Fairmile**  
 HP21 7JS

**Narbeth Drive**  
 HP201PU

**The Paddock**  
 Long Meadow. HP21 7AH

**Turnfurlong**  
 Turnfurlong Lane. HP21 7PJ

### Coldharbour

**Somerville Way**  
 HP19 7QH

### Elmhurst & Watermead

**Alfred Rose Park**   
 Dunsham Lane. HP20 2EP

**Dunsham Park**   
 Cleveland Rd. HP20 2AZ

### Elmhurst & Watermead

**Bateman Drive**  
 HP21 8AF

**Cottesloe Green**   
 Fremantle Road. HP21 8EJ  
 Basketball hoop.

**Simpson Place**  
 HP21 9PL

**Waivers Way**  
 HP21 9SQ

### Oakfield

**The Coppice**   
 Field Way. HP20 IXS  
 Practice goal & basketball hoop.

**Denby Walk**  
 HP20 ILN

**Haddington Way**  
 HP201HH

**Oakfield Road Open Space**   
 HP20 ILL

### Quarrendon

**Yellow Park**   
 Carlton Close, HP19 9HR.

**Haydon Hill**   
 Monet Place. HP19 8SL.  
 Basketball hoop.

### Gatehouse

**Meadowcroft**   
 Meadowcroft. HP19 9HH

### Riverside Walk

Meadowcroft. HP19 9LS

**Whitehill Park**   
 Off Oxford Road. HP19 8EF

### Southcourt

**Edinburgh Playing Fields**   
 Meadowcroft. HP19 9HH.

**Elm Green**   
 Meadowcroft. HP19 9LS.

**Walton Court**   
 Off Oxford Road. HP19 8EF.

## Buckingham

**Bridge Street**   
 Off London Rd. MK18 1AF

**Overn Avenue**  
 MK18 1LG

**Stratford Fields**  
 Wittmills Oak. MK18 7BH

## Rural

**Calvert Green**   
 Off Cotswolds Way. MK18 2FH,  
 MK18 2FE, MK18 2FF, NJ18 2FG  
 Spread over 4 sites with play areas for toddlers & Juniors.

**Gawcott**  
 The Rise. MK18 4HW.

Please enjoy and respect your play space and be considerate to others.  
 Please report any damage or comments regarding our play areas to our contractors on  
 0800 3893395 or Email: [enquiries@johnoconner.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@johnoconner.co.uk)



## Conservation Diary

Winter & Spring 2016

### January

06	College Lake Nature Reserve, Tring – Scrub clearance	SP936139
13	Upper Ray Meadows Nature Reserve – Hedge management	TBC
20	College Lake Nature Reserve, Tring – Scrub clearance	SP936139
27	Upper Ray Meadows Nature Reserve – Hedge management	TBC

### February

03	Abbey Farm, Singleborough – Hedge planting and laying	SP765317
10	Finemere Wood, Quainton – Tree planting	SP721215
17	The Coppice, Aylesbury – Wild flower plug planting and dead hedging	SP835146
24	Stear Farm, North Marston – Hedge planting	SP757223

### March

02	National Trust, Ashridge – A conservation task	TBC
09	Landscape Matters, Kingswood – Black poplar bed maintenance	SP688188
16	Lindengate, Worlds End – Habitat enhancement	SP857094
23	Akeley Wood – Rhododendron clearance and dead hedging	SP686385
30	Aylesbury – Wild flower plug planting	TBC

### April

06	Akeley Wood – Rhododendron clearance and dead hedging	SP686385
13	Waddesdon Common – Habitat management	SP759181
20	Green Dragon Eco Farm – Aquatic planting	SP738228
27	Visit to Stockers Lake, Rickmansworth	TQ047935

Please call us the day before to check the venue details and that there is space on the minibus.

Front cover: Incombe Hole, Ivinghoe



For people who care enough about the environment to do something about it.



## Winter & Spring 2016

Come along and help us to preserve and improve the countryside in the Vale.

### What We Do

VCV is a working party set up to care for and protect the wildlife and countryside of Aylesbury Vale.

We carry out practical conservation work and related activities using traditional crafts and skills in a varied programme of habitat restoration and creation.

This helps a wide range of endangered species such as the black poplar, barn owl and otter. Examples of activities we carry out are hedge and tree planting, wildlife style hedge laying, scrub clearance, wildflower planting, pond restoration and otter holt construction.

### What can the group offer?

#### Opportunities to:

- Learn new skills
- Widen your knowledge of the environment and nature
- Meet new people

#### We provide:

- Experienced leaders
- Training
- Safety gear
- Insurance
- Tea, coffee and biscuits!
- Transport to and from the site\*

### Who can volunteer?

The work is of a physical nature but you do not have to be super fit to join in. No experience is required – just enthusiasm and a willingness to have a go.

We meet most Wednesdays at 9.30am and return by 4.30pm.

Please wear suitable clothing, strong footwear and bring a packed lunch.

The group has a modern 12-seater minibus that makes travel to sites a pleasure!

\*Pick up is at Haydon Mill and Duck Farm Court (near Morrisons) in Aylesbury. As spaces on the minibus are limited please call to check availability.

If you wish to come under your own steam please ring to confirm that the task is still going ahead.



### Contact VCV

If you are interested, or would like to find out more about VCV, then don't hesitate to contact us by phone, email or post.

You can reach us on:

07952 045546  
07837 380802  
01296 427972

If you would prefer to write then our address is:

VCV  
Haydon Mill  
Rabans Lane  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP19 8RU

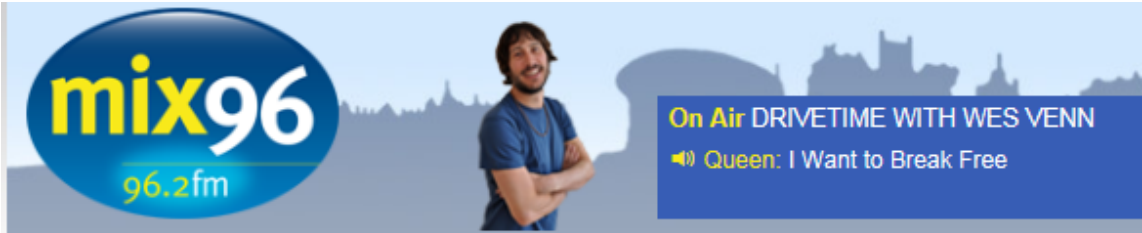
Email: [info@vcv.org.uk](mailto:info@vcv.org.uk)  
Or check out our web site at [www.vcv.org.uk](http://www.vcv.org.uk)

VCV is supported by Aylesbury Vale District Council and TCV.



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## Green Flag (Bedgrove Park)



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96.2fm

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Queen: I Want to Break Free

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### Aylesbury Park Gets Award For Sixth Time!

5:53am 28th August 2015

Bedgrove Park has been given an award for a sixth year in a row.

It's won a Green Flag for being welcoming, safe, clean and sustainable.

Councillor Jenny Bloom, Chairman of the Council, and members of the Bedgrove Residents Association were on hand to hoist the flag.

Aylesbury's Vale Park has also been awarded Green Flag status for the eighth year in a row.



The Green Flag scheme acknowledges excellence in parks and green spaces. Judging criteria includes having a welcoming atmosphere, a healthy, safe and secure environment, cleanliness and sustainability as well as an emphasis on community involvement.

In total, 1,582 parks, cemeteries, universities, shopping centres and community gardens in the UK have met the high standard needed to receive the Green Flag Award or the Green Flag Community Award.

Councillor Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Communities and Civic Amenities, said:

"Anyone who lives in or visits Aylesbury Vale knows that we have a number of excellent parks and green spaces throughout the district. These awards recognise the work that goes in to keeping them that way. I would like to say a huge thank you and congratulations to John O'Conner, Sita UK and our community spaces team who work extremely hard to ensure our parks and open spaces are maintained as beautiful places for residents to enjoy throughout the year."

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## Improvement Plan (2015/16 – 2017/18)

KEY: N/R = Not Required C = Action commenced ✓ = Action complete	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Value for Money</b>			
Apply for external funding when opportunities arise	✓		
Close working with Legal & Estates to enable the license, lease and sale of AVDC land where appropriate	✓		
Where possible avoid the adoption of recreation land from new developments	✓		
<b>Inform and Engage</b>			
Organise official opening of major capital improvements	✓		
Promote major capital projects through press releases	✓		
<b>Build Trust and Confidence</b>			
*Apply for Green Flag Award for Bedgrove Park	✓		
*Apply for Green Flag Award for Vale Park	✓		
<b>Improve Key Services</b>			
Alfred Rose Park – create and implement improvement Master-plan (incl. play area replacement & relocation, access/footpath improvements, additional seating, improve visibility into park, consider lighting)	C		
*Bedgrove Park – Create and implement improvement Master-plan (consider circumnavigation path, additional seating/bins, Bedgrove Brook improvements)	C		
Bowlers Field park creation feasibility study			
Bridge Street, Buckingham new skate park			
Closed Churchyards – resolves issues at Hulcott, structural testing of brick pillars at St. Mary's, Aylesbury, and implement memorial testing procedures.	C		
Heartlands, Buckingham footpath improvements	✓		
Implement Embleton Way improvements (incl. pavilion use & play/sports facilities)	C		
Meadowcroft Synthetic Turf Pitches feasibility study	✓		

<b>KEY: N/R = Not Required C = Action commenced ✓ = Action complete</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
The Paddock, Bedgrove Park – install bridge over brook and footpath, (dependent on Environment Agency consent)	✓		
Produce play area replacement programme	C		
*Riverside Walk footpath improvements	C		
S106 - implement programme of funding capital improvements	C		
* Vale Park - implement continued phased improvements (incl. Tree Planting, Additional seating, Entrance improvements, new skate park, Bearbrook access feasibility study)	C		
Whitehill Park lighting			
*Walnut Tree Meadow continued access improvements	✓		
Walton Court Playing Fields footpath improvements	✓		
<b>Change Lives for the Better</b>			
Liaise with Community Safety Team to reduce risk of anti social behaviour at parks and open spaces	✓		
Support the Events Procedure to increase community use of AVDC parks and open spaces	✓		
Support Parklife event in Vale Park	✓		
Support national Play Day, 'Play in the Park' event	✓		

\*Actions support the adopted AVDC Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011).

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny with information about mental health and wellbeing and services available in Aylesbury Vale.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the content of the report.

### 3 What is mental health and wellbeing?

- 3.1 **The World Health Organisation** defines mental health as “*a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community*”. It is a fundamental aspect of general health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 In 2013 the Local Government Association published a briefing paper for local authorities “**Tackling Mental Health Issues**”<sup>1</sup> which outlined the challenges, and the opportunities for local authorities to improve mental health and wellbeing. The document provides a useful introduction to mental health and wellbeing which is copied below:

#### Introduction – mental health and wellbeing explained

Mental illness is extremely common. One in four will experience a problem at some point in their lives.

This can range from mild bouts of depression to severe conditions, such as schizophrenia.

For some people they can be short-lived episodes, but others can struggle for much of their lives with illness.

All too often problems start at a young age. Half of those with lifetime mental illness first experience symptoms by the age of 14 and three-quarters by their mid 20s.

Improved mental health and wellbeing is associated with a range of better outcomes. These include improved physical health and life expectancy, better educational achievement, employment rates and reduced risky behaviours, such as smoking and alcohol misuse.

Mental health problems represent up to 23 per cent of the total burden of ill health – the largest single cause of disability.

Meanwhile, the cost to the economy is estimated to be about £105bn, of which about £30bn is work related, according to the Centre for Mental Health.

But in recent years the debate about mental health has moved beyond the absence or not of illness and towards the issue of good mental wellbeing. There are many different definitions of the term, although it is generally accepted to cover feeling good and functioning well.

This incorporates everything from emotional happiness and engagement to having a sense of purpose, achievement and control over your actions, according to the NHS Choice website.

Evidence suggests there are five steps to mental wellbeing: connecting with people, being active, keeping learning, giving and taking notice of the present moment from the environment around you to feelings and thoughts.

### 4 Mental Wellbeing

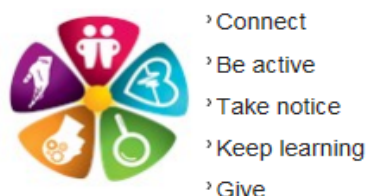
- 4.1 Wellbeing is when you feel good about yourself and your life. Improving mental health and wellbeing is associated with significant impacts for individuals and society, including better physical health, longer life

<sup>1</sup>Tackling Mental Health Issues is available at the following link - [http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=1af60bc7-a8a5-4585-ad14-cb99b78add5&groupId=10180](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=1af60bc7-a8a5-4585-ad14-cb99b78add5&groupId=10180)

expectancy, reduced inequalities, healthier lifestyles, improved academic achievement, enhanced community participation, reduced sickness absence and improved productivity as well as reduced costs from welfare, health and social care.

- 4.2 The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008) also refers to mental capital. This is an individual's cognitive and emotional resources which can influence their ability to cope with the ups and downs of life. The Foresight report recognises that mental capital and wellbeing affect an individual's path through life but also have wider impacts on the healthy functioning of families, communities and society.
- 4.3 The causes of, and influences on, mental wellbeing and mental health problems are wide ranging and interacting. Often they occur because of adverse events in our lives, but can also be influenced by other circumstances, or risk factors, such as poverty, unemployment, levels of supportive networks, and levels of education. The broader social environment also affects how resilient we are in coping with these challenges.
- 4.4 An annual personal wellbeing survey is undertaken by the Office of National Statistics. It asks respondents to rate themselves on a score of 1 – 10 on:
- Life satisfaction (10 = most satisfied)
  - Feeling worthwhile (10 = most worthwhile)
  - Feeling happy (10 = most happy)
  - Feeling anxious (10 = most anxious so low score is preferable).
- Average mental wellbeing scores are available at district council level and are provided at Appendix 1.
- 4.5 The Foresight report<sup>2</sup> identified 5 ways in which mental wellbeing could be improved and in Buckinghamshire these were developed into the "Five ways to wellbeing". The programme provides information and advice on how to improve wellbeing by introducing simple steps into our daily routine. More information about the programme can be found on the Bucks County Council website at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/healthy-living/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

### What are the Five Ways?



- 4.6 The district council provides a number of services which can support the five ways programme and therefore help to improve mental wellbeing. A few examples include: ...
- The provision of leisure facilities, including the provision of good quality parks and open spaces;
  - The provision, and promotion of physical activities, such as the new Active Vale programme;
  - Support for older people through our ageing well programme which is being rolled out across local area forums;
  - Support for the voluntary sector through our grants programme and Vale Lottery – which provides a variety of volunteering opportunities and a range of services within the community;

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<sup>2</sup> Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008).  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-capital-and-wellbeing-making-the-most-of-ourselves-in-the-21st-century>

- Supporting national and local mental health and wellbeing campaigns, by raising awareness across the district as well as targeted promotion to specific communities. These include the Heads up Campaign<sup>3</sup> focusing on men's mental health; raising awareness about Dementia; and mental health awareness week.
- 4.7 Many of the council's statutory functions in terms of housing, planning, community safety, and environmental health are vital in helping to reduce the risk factors affecting mental wellbeing.
- 4.8 Not only can the council support the community through its services, but it has a duty of care to its staff and supports staff wellbeing in a number of ways including:
- Learning and development opportunities – in addition to training related to job roles, there are a number of personal development opportunities and the council organises a 'learning at work week' to promote these opportunities. This is taking place in February 2016;
  - Mental health first aid training is available to our staff from Public Health, which aims to help staff to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues, provide help on a first aid basis, and effectively guide others in the right direction towards support;
  - Promoting opportunities for staff to be active, get involved in volunteering opportunities, or try something new, eg; the AVDC Choir.
  - Supporting flexible working, to help ensure a work-life balance.

## **5 Mental Health**

### 5.1 According to the NHS:

- At least one in four people experience a diagnosable mental health problem in any one year, and one in six experiences this at any one time.
- More than half of those with a common mental health problem have both depression and anxiety.
- There are approximately 570,000 people with dementia in England, a figure that could double in the next 30 years.
- Nearly 850,000 children and young people aged five to 16 years have a mental health problem – about 10% of the population. Fewer than one in 10 accesses treatment.

In Buckinghamshire residents generally have better mental wellbeing than the national average, and some key facts, published in the Joint Strategic needs Assessment (2013) are copied at Appendix 2.

#### Young people

- 5.2 Half of those with lifetime mental health problems first experience symptoms by the age of 14, making adolescence a crucial time for intervention and prevention.
- 5.3 In Buckinghamshire there are a number of sources of advice and support for young people, in addition to confidential advice and support from GPs, examples of which are listed at Appendix 3.

#### Adults

- 5.4 1 in 4 people will experience some kind of a mental health problem in the course of a year. 75% of people with mental ill-health, including depression and anxiety, do not seek or receive treatment, but research shows that if

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<sup>3</sup> <http://thisisheadsup.org/>

people experiencing mental distress access help and support early, they're likely to recover more quickly.

- 5.5 In Buckinghamshire there are a number of sources of advice and support for adults, in addition to confidential advice and support from GPs, examples of which are listed at Appendix 3.

## 6. Commissioning and monitoring of mental health services

There are a number of ways in which issues relating to mental health services can be highlighted and addressed:

- 6.1 There is a joint commissioning approach between the County Council and the Aylesbury and Chiltern Clinical Commissioning Groups to local mental health treatment services, for both young people and adults, and services are subject to contract monitoring by commissioners.
- 6.2 The Bucks County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee undertook a review of adult mental health services in March 2014, and full documentation for that review is available online<sup>4</sup>.
- 6.3 The Bucks County Council Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee plan to review Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in April 2016.
- 6.4 Specialist mental health services delivered by the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, which include those provided at the Whiteleaf Centre in Aylesbury, are registered and inspected by the Quality Care Commission whose reports are available online<sup>5</sup>.
- 6.5 As one of its five key themes, Healthwatch Bucks<sup>6</sup>, the independent consumer champion for health services across the county, aims to make sure that mental health services are accessible and that there is no stigma in seeking support.

Contact Officer	Stephanie Moffat 01296 585295
Background Documents	Bucks Adult Mental Health Commissioning Strategy 2015-18 Bucks Joint Strategic needs Assessment Other background documents are available through the links included within the report

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bucksc.gov.uk/news/2014/march/mental-health-services-under-scrutiny/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/mental-health>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.healthwatchbucks.co.uk/>

## Results of the annual Personal Wellbeing Survey 2014/15

The annual personal wellbeing survey is undertaken by the Office of National Statistics. It asks respondents to rate themselves on a score of 1 – 10 on:

- Life satisfaction (10 = most satisfied)
- Feeling worthwhile (10 = most worthwhile)
- Feeling happy (10 = most happy)
- Feeling anxious (10 = most anxious so low score is preferable).

Average mental wellbeing scores are available at district council level and are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Wellbeing Measures for Buckinghamshire County Council and District Councils.

	Life Satisfaction	Feeling Worthwhile	Happy	Anxiety
England	7.6	7.81	7.45	2.86
South East	7.72	7.91	7.54	2.82
Buckinghamshire	7.78	7.99	7.46	3.16
Aylesbury Vale	7.77	7.94	7.33	3.05
Chiltern	8.02	8.16	7.95	2.95
South Bucks	7.89	7.84	7.62	3.18
Wycombe	7.62	8.00	7.29	3.37

Data Source: [Reference Table 1: Personal Well-being Estimates Geographical Breakdown, 2014/15 \(Excel sheet 665Kb\)](#). ONS. 2015.

Average life satisfaction is slightly higher across the South East Region than England and Buckinghamshire is significantly higher than England but similar to the South East.

Feeling worthwhile is statistically significantly higher in the South East Region than England. Buckinghamshire is not significantly higher than the South East but is significantly higher than some peer comparator local authorities and similar to others (such as Oxfordshire).

Happiness is statistically significantly higher in the South East Region compared to the England average. Happiness in Buckinghamshire is statistically significantly higher than England and similar to the Regional average. It is also similar to the majority of peer comparator local authorities.

There is no statistically significant difference for anxiety levels between and the South East. In Buckinghamshire levels of anxiety are statistically significantly higher than both the South East and England and similar to some peer local authority areas (Suffolk and Hertfordshire) but higher than some others (Warwickshire and Oxfordshire).

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## **Buckinghamshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2013**

### **Extract from the Executive Summary**

#### **Ch.6 Healthy lifestyles (P9)**

##### **Key messages**

- Regular physical activity is important throughout life. It prevents many health conditions, can be a core part of treatment, can help maintain independence, and promotes mental health. Yet only one in five people are sufficiently active to benefit their health in Buckinghamshire.
- Drinking alcohol above recommended levels increases the risk of a range of physical and mental health conditions, can affect relationships, and is linked to violent crime. More than a fifth of adults in Buckinghamshire drink alcohol at levels that are a risk to their health.
- Obese children are at increased risk of various physical and mental health problems which can impact on their social and educational development. Obese children are also at risk of becoming obese adults. Approaching a third of 10-11 year olds (30%) and a fifth of 4-5 year olds (20%) are overweight or obese in Buckinghamshire. The proportion of obese and overweight children in Buckinghamshire has increased since 2006/07.

#### **Ch.7 Children, young people and families**

##### Children aged 5-11 (p.13)

##### **Key messages**

- Improvements to mental health and emotional wellbeing in primary school aged children can make a big difference to a child's future.
- National prevalence of mental disorders, defined as when it causes distress to the child or has a considerable impact on the child's day to day life, is slightly lower in the primary school age group (7.7%), compared to the secondary school age group (11.5%).
- Nationally, boys aged 5-10 years old are twice as likely as girls to have a mental disorder (10.2% compared to 5.1%). Primary school aged children from lone parents (12.1%) and cohabiting couple families (9.2%) are more likely than the children of married couple families (5.9%) to have a mental disorder.
- Nationally, primary school aged children of unemployed parents are more than twice as likely (20%) to experience mental health disorders as those with one or both parents working (9%).

##### Young people aged 11-18 (p.15)

##### **Key messages**

- Mental health is central to quality of life, and vital for successful education, training and employment. Half of those with lifetime mental health problems first experience

symptoms by the age of 14, making adolescence a crucial time for intervention and prevention.

- 11- to 15-year-olds looked after by local authorities are four to five times more likely to have a mental disorder.
- 1365 of the children with statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) are due to turn 18 in the next five years. Of these, 20 young people aged 14-17 have profound and multiple learning disabilities, 100 have severe learning disabilities, and 400 have moderate learning disabilities. It is these young people along with a smaller number of children with complex physical disabilities and those that access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services who will require transition support as they move from child into adult social care services and systems.

## **Ch.8 Adults and older people**

### 8.3.2 People with Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairments (p20)

#### **Key messages**

- People with a disability are more likely to experience problems with hate crime or harassment; a quarter of all disabled people say that they have experienced hate crime or harassment, and this number rises to 47% of people with mental health conditions.

### 8.4 Mental health and wellbeing (p21)

#### **Key messages**

- Buckinghamshire residents have better mental wellbeing than the national average.
- Many people are affected by mental health problems - one in four British adults may experience a mental health problem in the course of a year.
- Around a third of people with a long term condition may also have a mental health problem, such as depression or anxiety.
- Depression is widely acknowledged to be the most common mental health problem among older people. For people aged 85 years and over nationally, levels of depressive symptoms were 40% for men and 43% for women.
- It has been estimated that nearly two thirds of older people with a depressive illness have never discussed this with their GP
- Buckinghamshire had one of the lowest mental health hospital admission rates in the country for people of all ages (2009-12)
- Mental health hospital admission rates for those of working age were more than three and a half times higher for those living in the most deprived quintile of Buckinghamshire compared to the least deprived quintile (2009/10 – 2011/12).
- The suicide rate in Buckinghamshire is similar to the national average. There are a relatively small number of suicides in the county.

#### **Key facts**

- 79.3% of people in Buckinghamshire had high or very high life satisfaction, compared to 75.9% in the UK (2012). 82.7% felt that their lives were worthwhile, compared to 80% in the UK.
- The number of people in Buckinghamshire who have a severe mental illness recorded by their general practice was 3,305 (0.63% of the total population) in March 2012, compared to 0.82% nationally. Prevalence was higher in the most deprived quintile (0.86%) compared to the least deprived quintile (0.50%)

- In Buckinghamshire an estimated 40,530 people aged 16-64 had a common mental health problem<sup>1</sup> at any one time in 2011 (12.7% of the 16-64 population), compared to an estimated 15.0% in the South East and 16.6% nationally.
- 9.3% of all people in Buckinghamshire have had depression (ever, as recorded by their GP), compared to 9.2% nationally (2011/12).
- The three year average suicide rate in Buckinghamshire in 2008/10 was 8.2/100,000 population, statistically similar to the rate for England (7.9/100,000)

### 8.5 Older People (p21)

#### **Key messages**

- Depression is the most common mental health problem among older people.

### 8.6 Carers (p23)

#### **Key messages**

- Carers are over twice as likely to have mental health problems if they provide substantial care.

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/community/knowning-bucks/joint-strategic-needs-assessment/>

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<sup>1</sup> Common mental health problems include anxiety, depression, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders & panic disorders



## **Mental Health Services**

### **Advice and support for young people**

In addition to confidential advice and support from GPs:

Time to Talk Bucks - a countywide counselling service, which gives young people, aged 11 – 25, a free, easy-to-access service offering non-judgmental and confidential support through a range of channels, in a safe and friendly environment. <http://www.timetotalkbucks.org.uk/>

Child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) provides mental health services for children and young people aged 0-18 years experiencing early onset of mental health difficulties as well as those with serious mental health conditions. Referrals must be made via a professional who knows the child or family e.g. GP, teacher, School nurse, social worker, etc. Young people aged 16-17 are also now able to directly self-refer via the phone. <http://www.youngcarersbucks.org/>

The Young Minds website contains lots of useful information on mental health and emotional wellbeing for young people, parents and professionals. <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Young Carers Bucks – can provide help and support to young people aged between 6 and 18, who regularly look after someone in their home who has a long term illness/condition. <http://www.youngcarersbucks.org/>

Child Bereavement UK – Provide help and support for young people who have been affected by bereavement, or serious illness. <http://www.childbereavementuk.org/support/young-people/>

### **Advice and support for adults**

In addition to confidential advice and support from GPs:

Healthy Minds is a NHS service offering quick and easy access to talking therapies, practical support and employment advice. The website also provides access to a range of on-line evidence-based self-help resources. <http://www.healthymindsbucks.nhs.uk/>

Bucks MIND provides support to people with mental health needs and offers one-to-one counselling, befriending, peer support and more. <http://www.bucksmind.org.uk/>

Carers Bucks provides support for unpaid carers. <http://www.carersbucks.org/>

Cruse Bucks provides help with bereavement. <http://www.crusebucks.org.uk/>

Buckinghamshire and Mid-Thames Relate provide help with relationships. <http://www.relate.org.uk/>

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## PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REGENERATION POLICY

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 Under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 Local Authorities can adopt policies that enable local discretionary spend of disabled facilities grants (DFG) budgets (in addition to the provision of the mandatory DFG scheme outlined in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) as well as discretionary grant and loan schemes to regenerate private sector housing stock in their area.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the existing private sector housing grant and loan schemes currently offered by AVDC and suggests additional and alternative schemes that should be adopted to better enable regeneration of the private sector housing stock in the Vale. The policy focuses particularly on assisting target groups of residents including older people, disabled people, vulnerable groups (e.g. those on low incomes living in poor quality housing). It also suggests the provision of a landlord loan scheme to help improve conditions in rented private sector housing stock.

### 2 Recommendations

That members:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy
- 2.2 Agree a discretionary approach to the spend of DFG budget to widen the grant schemes that are available from solely Mandatory DFG to Mandatory DFG, Relocation Grants, Discretionary DFG top-up and Urgent Hospital Discharge Adaptations Grants
- 2.3 Agree the reallocation of £100,000 underspent capital budget to set up a landlord loan scheme in the Vale
- 2.4 Agree the set up of an Essential Repairs Grant (to replace Minor Works Grants) and the reallocation of £50,000 of capital budget spend towards this scheme.

### 3 Supporting information

- 3.1 National, regional and local policies and objectives provide AVDC and its partners with a broad strategic framework to work within. These include a focus on growth and investment in the private housing sector as key to increased choice, access and better standards.
- 3.2 Government advise that it is important that the private rented sector is seen as an attractive alternative to owner occupation and have recommended a number of measures to improve and develop the sector. These include simplifying the regulatory framework, raising standards by providing Councils with increased flexibility to enforce housing law, regulating agencies, longer tenancies and increased housing supply.
- 3.3 This policy focuses on the provision of grants and loans to support private sector housing regeneration but it is important to note that alongside this AVDC use enforcement powers under the Housing Act 2004 to raise standards in the private rented sector and deal with rogue landlords. AVDC also operates mandatory and additional licensing schemes for houses in

multiple occupation which aim to improve standards and protect vulnerable tenants living in this type of housing stock.

- 3.4 The Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy sits below, and contributes to the objectives outlined within AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17. Private sector housing stock includes houses in private ownership and occupation as well as privately rented properties.

#### **4 Housing Profile**

The private sector housing sector plays a valuable role in the housing market in the Vale comprising of 61,500 of the 77,000 total dwellings in the Vale. At the time of the last stock condition survey in 2007 16.8% of private sector housing stock did not meet a 'decent' standard.

- 4.1 Poor housing conditions in the Vale are associated with households in social and economic disadvantage. This affects the ability of households to repair and improve their dwellings. At the time of the Survey 25.6% of all households living in non-decent housing were elderly. Economically vulnerable households accounted for 33.8% of all households living in non-decent housing. In the private rented sector 39% of vulnerable households were living in non-decent housing.
- 4.2 Aylesbury Vale has an aging population with increasing numbers of people living with a limiting long term illness or disability. At the last census in 2011 68,000 people in Buckinghamshire reported having a limiting long term illness or disability (an increase of 12.4% from the previous census)
- 4.3 There is a significant link between housing quality and health. Factors such as damp and mould, overcrowding and excess cold are associated with long term conditions such as heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and mental illness as well as an increased risk of mortality.

#### **5 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002**

- 5.1 To use these powers the Local Authority must adopt and publish a policy setting out how the powers will be used. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17 and the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy fulfil this obligation. The Order contains important protections relating to the giving of assistance, whether it is given as a grant, loan or another form of help.
- 5.2 Currently AVDC offer the following private sector grant and loan assistance (these are outlined in more detail within the report at):

- Minor works grant up to £2500
- Mandatory disabled facilities grant up to £30,000
- Empty Homes loan
- Flexible Home Improvement Loan (FHIL)

It is recommended that the Minor works Grant is replaced with an Essential repairs Grant of up to £10,000. In addition the following grants and loans will be offered alongside the mandatory DFG, Empty Homes Loan and FHIL:

- Discretionary DFG top-up of up to £20,000
- Relocation Grant up to £30,000
- Urgent Hospital Discharge Adaptations Grant up to £10,000



- Landlord Loan Scheme up to £10,000

## **6 Resource implications**

- 6.1 The policy sets out the financial resources required. In summary DFG funding is provided jointly via the Better Care Fund at Buckinghamshire County Council and AVDC capital spend budgets.
- 6.2 Since 2011/12 there has been a year on year underspend of AVDC capital funds on mandatory DFGs. The reasons for this are not due to decreased demand (in fact there is an increasing demand for DFGs) and are in part due to the lack of flexibility AVDC currently has available to meet the differing needs of applicants and facilitate the spend of the budget.
- 6.3 In future years it is imperative that AVDC have flexibility and discretion within the grants process to facilitate budget spend and ensure that vulnerable tenants in private sector housing are able to access support. The policy sets out an increased range of discretionary grant and loan proposals to better meet the needs of those in relevant target groups. This will require the reallocation of some capital funding.
- 6.4 The introduction of additional discretionary grants alongside the mandatory DFG will increase the range of grant options available and allow AVDC to better tailor grant support to meet individual needs. It is proposed that mandatory DFG funds and AVDC capital funds allocated for DFG spend are maintained in one budget stream, funding mandatory DFGs, Discretionary DFG top-up, Relocation Grants and Hospital Discharge Urgent Adaptation Grants.
- 6.5 In order to provide a reasonable level of funding for the new Essential Repairs Grants it is proposed that in addition to the £30,000 budget previously allocated to Minor Repairs Works, £50,000 of the capital funding allocated to DFGs is reassigned to Essential Repairs Grants, increasing the total grant funding available to £80,000.
- 6.6 In addition it is proposed that the historical £100,000 capital fund underspend is used to establish a landlord's loan scheme.

Contact Officer	Lindsey Hone ext 5152
Background Documents	None

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## **Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy – Aylesbury Vale**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy document is to assist officers of the Council with the interpretation and implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, Housing Act 2004 and Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 so far as it relates to the improvement of private sector housing stock in Aylesbury Vale.

### **2. The Policy in Context**

- 2.1 National, regional and local policies and objectives provide AVDC and its partners with a broad strategic framework to work within. The key policies and objectives that have informed the draft of this policy are detailed below:

#### **2.2 Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011**

This document provides a clear directive from Government on its approach and priorities on housing policy focusing on the development of a thriving, active and stable housing market that supports choice, flexibility and affordable housing. The strategy outlines the link between housing and economic growth as well as health and well-being and states that the private rented sector is continuing to grow in both size and importance. The Government supports growth and investment in the private sector housing market and considers this key to increased choice, access and better standards in the sector. Alongside this it also supports tough enforcement against rogue landlords who do not provide adequate housing for their tenants.

#### **2.3 The Private Rented Sector – CLG Select Committee Report 2013**

This Select Committee report states that it is important that the private rented sector is seen as an attractive alternative to owner occupation and recommends a number of measures to support the growth and development of the private rented sector including:

- Simplify regulation – the provision of a more straightforward regulatory framework for the sector
- Raise standards – provide Councils with the flexibility required to enforce the law and raise standards particularly with regard to the licensing of landlords
- Regulate agencies – develop new regulation to deal with abuses by letting agents
- Longer tenancies – ensure that the market offers longer tenancies to those that need them, particularly families
- Increase supply – across all housing tenure types.

#### **2.4 Welfare Reform Act 2012**

The Act sets out a number of fundamental reforms to welfare provision which will impact on some households living in the private rented sector (see AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17)

## **2.5 Localism Act 2011**

This Act enables Local Authorities to discharge their homelessness duty through an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector (see AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17)

## **2.5 The Energy Act 2011**

The Energy Act introduced the Green Deal scheme. It also places an obligation on energy companies to help the poorest and most vulnerable households with saving energy. A range of energy efficiency measures are also introduced by the Act including smart meters, energy performance certificates and clearer energy bills (see Buckinghamshire County Fuel Poverty Strategy which aims to enable residents in Buckinghamshire to achieve affordable warmth). Aylesbury Vale District Council work with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to provide an affordable warmth service for residents in the Vale.

## **2.6 The Housing Act 2004**

The Housing Act introduced powers to improve the management of the private rented sector through licensing, the return to use of long-term empty homes and to improve the health and safety of occupants in dwellings. Measures include:

### **The Housing Health & Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS)**

The HHSRS is a risk rating tool used to assess the potential risks to the health and safety of occupants, potential occupants and visitors to a residential property. The system assesses 29 prescribed hazards within a property which are scored as either Category 1 (serious) hazards or Category 2 (less serious) hazards. Where a Category 1 hazard is identified in a property the Council has a legal duty to take action. The Council has discretion to take action on Category 2 hazards where appropriate to do so.

### **Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

The licensing of HMOs aims to raise standards in some of the highest risk residential properties where tenants are often most vulnerable. The two schemes in operation in Aylesbury Vale are:

- Mandatory licensing scheme – there is a national mandatory licensing scheme for some types of HMO.
- Additional licensing Scheme – in 2015 an additional HMO licensing scheme was introduced in Aylesbury Vale which means that all houses in multiple occupation with 3 or more occupants require a licence. The scheme aims to improve standards across the private rented sector in the Vale and to ensure a supply of good quality affordable housing in this tenure type.

## Empty Homes

This enables the Council to bring privately owned properties that have been empty long-term back into use via enforcement measures such as Compulsory Purchase, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Improvement Notices.

### 2.7 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

This Act provides for grants from local housing authorities to be made towards the cost of works required for the provision of facilities by disabled people.

### 2.8 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England and Wales Order 2002

The Order provides powers to Local Authorities to provide assistance to any person in their area for the purposes of acquiring living accommodation and adapting repairing or improving living accommodation.

## 3. Local Context

The Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy sits within a corporate framework and below the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. It contributes towards meeting the objectives outlined within the strategy predominantly by maximising the use of private sector housing.

Corporate objectives	AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17 objectives	Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy objectives
To secure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Vale.	Maximise the supply of affordable housing  Prevent and reduce homelessness  Maximise the use of private sector homes  Respond to the challenges of welfare reforms	Improve the quality of the private housing stock in the Vale  Positively impact the health and wellbeing of those living in non-decent private dwellings  Enable disabled people to live independent, healthy lives for longer  Reduce the number of long term empty properties in the Vale  Actively tackle rogue landlords

## 4. Housing Profile

4.1 Private sector housing stock includes houses in private ownership and occupation as well as privately rented properties. The private housing sector plays a valuable

role in the housing market in the Vale with the majority of properties in owner occupation. Generally housing conditions in the Vale compare favourably to the national picture.

- 4.2 Aylesbury Vale, along with the rest of Buckinghamshire, has an aging population. At the last census in 2011 68,000 people in Buckinghamshire reported having a limiting long term illness or disability (an increase of 12.4% from the previous census). The number of people with long term health conditions is likely to continue to increase with the aging population in Buckinghamshire (Director of Public Health for Buckinghamshire Annual Report 2012/13). There is a significant link between housing quality and health. Factors such as damp and mould, overcrowding and excess cold are associated with long term conditions such as heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and mental illness as well as an increased risk of mortality. People living in poor quality housing are more likely to suffer with poor health than those people living in good quality housing. Overcrowded households can encourage the spread of certain medical conditions, such as tuberculosis. Households without central, or other adequate heating, can suffer from damp and mould growth, which can lead to respiratory problems. Poorly heated households can suffer from excess cold, which in turn can increase the likelihood of premature mortality ('a ward level analysis of the housing and health profiles of Aylesbury Vale', Feb 2015).
- 4.3 Periodically the Council carries out a stock condition survey of private sector housing stock. The last Private Sector Housing Condition Survey was carried out in 2007 and at this time private sector housing stock in the Vale numbered 61,500 dwellings (the total number of dwellings in the Vale as of 31/03/2015 was 77,000).
- 4.4 Of these 16.8% (10,355 dwellings) did not meet satisfactory of 'decent' standards (Category 1 HHSRS hazards, failure to be in reasonable repair, failure to provide reasonable modern amenities, failure to provide effective insulation and/or efficient heating all are considered to be indicators of non-decent housing). Although this figure is well below the national average (37.5%) there remains a need to improve standards in this area
- 4.5 The Survey indicated that poor housing conditions in the Vale are associated with households in social and economic disadvantage. This affects the ability of households to repair and improve their dwellings. At the time of the Survey 25.6% of all households living in non-decent housing were elderly. Economically vulnerable households accounted for 33.8% of all households living in non-decent housing. In the private rented sector 39% of vulnerable households were living in non-decent housing.
- 4.6 At the time of the Survey 6,317 (10.9%) private sector households were living in fuel poverty (the equivalent national average at the time was 11.1%). However rates were above average in some areas of the Vale, particularly in the private rented sector (14.4%) and for inter-war housing (21.2%).

## **5. Housing Assistance**

### **5.1 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996**

This Act places a mandatory duty on the Local Housing Authority to provide grants to be made towards the cost of works required for the provision of facilities for disabled people. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are provided to adapt a home environment to restore or enable independent living for individuals with a disability. The maximum amount of grant funding that can be awarded under a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000.

### **5.2 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England and Wales Order 2002**

The Order provides powers to Local Authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal to any person in their area for the purposes of acquiring living accommodation and adapting repairing or improving living accommodation.

In order to use these powers the Local Authority must adopt and publish a policy setting out how the powers will be used. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17 and the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy fulfil this obligation. The Order contains important protections relating to the giving of assistance, whether it is given as a grant, loan or another form of help. It requires that:

- authorities set out in writing the terms and conditions under which assistance is being given; and
- before giving any assistance the authority must be satisfied that the person has received appropriate advice or information about the extent and nature of any obligation (financial or otherwise) that they will be taking on; and
- before making a loan, or requiring repayment of a loan or grant, the authority must have regard to the person's ability to afford to make a contribution or repayment.

The discretionary spending powers within the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 can be used alongside the mandatory DFG framework to top up mandatory grants or to facilitate solutions that enable flexibility, quality and choice for the applicant to meet their specific needs.

### **5.3 Policy Priorities: Target groups**

Information from sources such as the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2007 and Public Health Buckinghamshire provide an evidence base for targeting housing assistance to particular groups within the community in Aylesbury Vale:

- Older people - older people are more likely to live in substandard and poorly heated homes, and can be vulnerable to home accidents including slips, trips and falls.
- Disabled people – discretionary housing assistance can provide a package of additional assistance measures outside of the mandatory DFG system which allows more flexibility based on the disabled persons needs
- Vulnerable groups – those on low incomes may not be able to carry out essential repairs to their properties resulting in impacts on their health and wellbeing The

HHSRS can be used to risk rate hazards in dwellings to determine where repairs are required to improve health outcomes.

- Landlords – housing assistance for landlords can be provided to help kick start improvements in standards in privately rented properties, benefitting vulnerable individuals and families.

#### **5.4 Working in Partnership**

AVDC currently operate a Staying Put service which assists DFG grant applicants with the spend of the grant by coordinating building works and assisting with the sourcing of contractors to carry out works. This is an optional service that a grant applicant can choose to take from AVDC. A fee of 15% of the total grant is charged for the Staying Put service. The benefit of this service is that applicants who may otherwise have struggled to organise works benefit from timely adaptations made to their properties. The uptake of the Staying Put service in AVDC is high with 68% of grant applicants taking up the service in 2013/14 generating an income of £48,000 towards the cost of providing the service during this period.

Staying Put Officers also administer Flexible Home Improvement Loans and Minor Works Grants, providing financial advice and assistance to applicants.

AVDC jointly fund the National Energy Foundation to provide advice and assistance to residents in the Vale on energy efficiency measures and schemes available to residents, including those in fuel poverty. AVDC promote this through our website and via Officers who come into contact with residents in need of assistance in these areas.

AVDC are members of the Buckinghamshire Joint Housing Adaptations Group which brings together the District Councils, County Council (including adult and children services) and representatives from the Registered providers who operate in the Vale including VAHT.



## 6. Types of assistance currently offered

Currently the following forms of housing assistance are available to private owners and tenants within the Vale:

Tool	Key Outcome	Eligibility criteria	Conditions	Max £/case	Annual budget	Proposal
Minor repairs grant	Minor but essential repairs to make non-decent properties safer for occupants	Owner occupier in receipt of means tested state benefit, Aged 60+ or Under 60 with 1+ child under 10 years.	Interest free, land charge repayable if property sold within 5 years	£2500, Not more than £5000 in any 5 year period	£30,000	Discontinued and replaced by Essential Repairs Grant
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Adaptations to enable independent living	Referral via County Council Social Services, Means tested contribution towards costs (adults only), Works must be necessary and appropriate to meet needs of disabled person, Works must be reasonable to age/condition of dwelling.	Part repayable within 10 years on sale of property (in some cases)	£30,000	£741,000 (£417K from Better Care Fund at BCC, £324K AVDC capital funding.	Retain alongside new additional discretionary grants
Empty Homes Loan	To facilitate the return of long-term empty homes to the housing market	Homeowner or person wishing to purchase an empty property, Property empty over 2 years, Owner can live in or let property.	Loan secured against property, Interest charged at 2% over base rate (capped at 7%, collared at 3.5%), Loan with interest repayable within 5 years or when the property is sold (if sooner)	£30,000	£240,000 (shared loan scheme pot with FHIL)	Retain

Flexible Home Improvement Loan (FHIL)	To help make the home safer, warmer or healthier during retirement	Aged 60+, Homeowner	Loan secured against property, Interest charged at The Bank of England base rate with a 'cap' and a 'collar' i.e. lowest interest rate is 3.5% and highest 7% , Loan repayable if home is sold or owners cease to occupy it (if sooner)	£30,000 (in majority of cases)		retain
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## 7. Additional housing assistance measures proposed

These housing assistance grants and loans will remain in place other than the Minor Repairs Grant which shall be replaced with Essential repairs Grants as detailed below. To enable flexibility and the targeting of resources where they can be most effective there are a number of additional assistance proposals AVDC should consider adopting. These are detailed as follows:

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>	<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<b>Conditions</b> (see appendix 1 for benefits eligibility information)	<b>Max £/case</b>	<b>Annual budget</b>
Essential Repairs Grant	Essential repairs to make a non-decent home safe, warm and watertight for vulnerable occupiers	Owner occupier in receipt of means tested state benefit  Must have owned property for minimum of 2 years  Category 1 HHSRS hazard or multiple Category 2 hazards identified that pose a risk to health	Interest free, land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided	£10,000,  Not more than £10,000 in any 5 year period	£80,000 (2016/17)
Landlord Loan Scheme	To provide incentives for landlords to improve standards for tenants in privately rented property.  Works to include fire protection, energy efficiency measures and works to address HHSRS category 1 and 2 hazards	Must be a landlord and the own property  Property must be tenanted and let, or available to let, for a period of 5 years from the date of the loan	Repaid if the Council carries out works in default or prosecutes the landlord within 5 years from the date of the loan  Loan secured against the property. Loan with interest repayable within 5 years or when the property is sold (if sooner)	£10,000  Not more than £10,000 in any 10 year period	£100,000 (2016/17)

Discretionary DFG top-up	Top-up to mandatory DFG where cost of work exceeds maximum grant	<p>Must be eligible for a mandatory DFG</p> <p>Where applicant is a child one parent must be in receipt of a means tested benefit.</p>	<p>Cost/benefit analysis of options available including relocation to a more suitable property</p> <p>Interest free, land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner)</p>	£20,000	£691,000 (2016/17 budgets TBC)
Relocation Grant	Financial assistance for disabled people towards the costs of relocation to a more suitable home	<p>Must be eligible for a mandatory DFG</p> <p>OT report that new home is suitable to meet needs of disabled person</p> <p>Council must deem rehousing as most suitable and cost-effective option</p>	<p>Interest free, land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner)</p>	£30,000	
Hospital Discharge Urgent Adaptations Grant	Financial assistance to carry out urgent adaptations to a home to facilitate hospital discharge	<p>Owner occupier or private tenant in receipt of means tested state benefit. Where applicant is a child one parent must be in receipt of a means tested benefit.</p> <p>Must be in hospital at time of referral and awaiting discharge</p>	<p>Property must be occupied on a permanent basis by applicant</p>	£10,000	

		Referral from hospital OT advising of needs			
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Note: Appendix 2: provides more detail on the purpose, eligibility criteria and conditions of the above grants and loans. This information is an illustrative guide only and may be subject to change following legal consultation and prior to the production of procedural document for the individual grants and loans.

## 8. Financial resources

8.1 Mandatory DFGs for occupiers other than those in VAHT properties (and some other Registered Providers) are currently jointly funded via the Better Care Fund budget at Buckinghamshire County Council and from AVDC Capital budgets. The statutory duty to deliver adaptations rests with the District Council with finance allocation determined by the County Council year on year (until 2014/15 funding was allocated for DFGs by DCLG). As part of the stock transfer agreement between AVDC and the VAHT, VAHT pledged to take on responsibility for the provision and financial resources required to deliver adaptations in their housing stock. VAHT are required to meet the cost of up to £400,000 worth of disabled adaptations within their properties per annum up to 2036.

8.2 The maximum amount of mandatory DFG grant that can be provided was increased from £25,000 to £30,000 in May 2008 and has not increased since. As a result mandatory DFG funding levels have not kept pace with inflation and the increasing costs of building works. This means that the scope of works that fall within the mandatory £30,000 DFG limit has decreased over time with a number of adaptations each year costing well over this amount. At the moment the cost of any works over the mandatory DFG limit has to be covered by the applicant through additional lending (if they are able to obtain this) and occasionally via charity funding.

8.3 In recent years AVDC has struggled to spend the funding allocation available for DFGs, ending 2014/15 with £125,000 of underspend. This has been a trend year on year. In previous years where VAHT have had a waiting list for adaptations AVDC have provided additional payment allocation. It is worth noting that VAHT provide an annual allocation as per the Stock Transfer Agreement that equates to around £50 per VAHT dwelling to provide disabled adaptations in comparison to the £11 per dwelling that AVDC have available to provide adaptations in non-VAHT properties (note: some other Registered Providers also contribute towards the cost of adaptation works in their properties though not to the same scale).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Underspend</b>	<b>Additional allocation to VAHT</b>
2011/12	£89,100	
2012/13	£182,800	£85,600
2013/14	nil	£93,900
2014/15	£125,000	

8.4 This year on year underspend is not because of reduced demand, in fact there is a growing need within the community associated with an aging population and an increase in the number of people living with long-term health conditions. This is reflected within the recent Better Care Fund policy statement which indicates that the national allocation for DFGs is set to double in 2016/17 (although details of local authority allocations are yet to be announced).

- 8.5 In recent years the underspend at AVDC has been a result of historical delays in the referral system from Adult Social Services at the County Council. In 2014/15 additional resources were brought in by BCC to address this and it has now been largely resolved. . The underspend can also be attributed to a lack of flexibility within the current system to adequately meet the range of needs and scope of works required within the private housing stock. Work is also currently underway to review DFG provision and services across Buckinghamshire with a view to improving the end-to-end service for the client to speed up the referral, application and approval process.
- 8.6 Looking at current and projected spend for 2015/16 it is anticipated that at the end of the financial period there will be capital funds remaining to the value of £100,000. In future years it is imperative that AVDC have flexibility and discretion within the grants process to facilitate budget spend and ensure that vulnerable tenants in private sector housing are able to access support.
- 8.7 The introduction of additional discretionary grants alongside the mandatory DFG will increase the range of grant options available and allow AVDC to better tailor grant support to meet individual needs. It is proposed that mandatory DFG funds and AVDC capital funds allocated for DFG spend are maintained in one budget stream, funding mandatory DFGs, Discretionary DFG top-up, Relocation Grants and Hospital Discharge Urgent Adaptation Grants.
- 8.8 In addition it is proposed that the historical £100,000 capital fund underspend is used to establish a landlords loan scheme. The Council already work with a Flexible Home Improvement Loans company (FHIL) who were set up in 2007 initially with a loan from Central Government. FHIL is a not-for-profit company 100% owned and controlled by its 17 local authority members, of which AVDC is one. Since the scheme started, loan repayments (regular direct debits, irregular payments and redemptions) have continued to increase and in the last financial year £968,289 was repaid, bringing the total repayment up to £2.8 million which has been recycled as further loans. By the end of the 2014/2015 financial year the total Flexible Home Improvement Loan offers made had topped £10 million. FHIL have advised that they already have a rented property loan scheme established which could be adapted to meet AVDC requirements. Any funds allocated to establish a Landlords Loan scheme would be ring fenced for this purpose in the Vale.
- 8.9 The funding level previously allocated to Minor Works Grants was £2500. This level of grant was set in 2004 and has not been reviewed since this date. As a result it is common for officers to award two Minor Repairs Grants at the same time (2 can be awarded within a 5 year period) in order to fund the cost of necessary works. Given inflationary increases and increases in costs within the building trade this level of grant funding is insufficient to fund most work schemes.
- 8.10 In order to provide a reasonable level of funding for the new Essential Repairs Grants it is proposed that in addition to the £30,000 budget previously allocated to Minor Repairs Works, £50,000 of the capital funding allocated to DFGs is reassigned to Essential Repairs Grants, increasing the total grant funding available

to £80,000. The level of demand and funding allocation for Essential Repairs Grants will be reviewed towards the end of the 2016/17 period to determine whether this is an effective use of funding and is benefiting those living in private sector housing in poor repair.

8.11 The provision of the range of grants and loans specified above will continue to benefit disabled people, the elderly and vulnerable households on low incomes, thus meeting the objectives within this policy.

## **9. Administration**

### **9.1 Publicity**

Information on private sector housing grant and loan assistance is provided via our website including information on how to apply for a grant or loan. Once adopted the website will be updated to reflect our new offering. Information provided will include:

- the process to be used to apply for assistance, including any preliminary enquiry system;
- how persons can obtain access to the process of applying for assistance;
- details of conditions that will apply to the provision of assistance, how conditions will be enforced and in what circumstances they may be waived;
- advice that is available, including financial advice, to assist persons wishing to enquire about, and apply for, assistance;

### **9.2 Implementation**

If approved the grants and loans specified within this policy would be implemented in the 2015/16 period following legal consultation and the draft of procedural documents.

### **9.3 Monitoring and review**

Spend against budget allocation is monitored on a monthly basis. There will be a need to review the implementation of all new grants and loans in terms of effectiveness, uptake and spend. However particular regard will need to be given to the Essential Repairs Grant and Landlord Loan Scheme within the first year of implementation in order to consider and determine appropriate funding levels for the following year in relation to demand and outcomes.

Lindsey Hone  
21<sup>st</sup> January 2016.



## List of benefits indicating eligibility for Essential Repairs Grants

*Note: The benefits specified below indicate eligibility at the time of draft of this report. Given that the welfare system is undergoing a period of transformation it is proposed that these will be subject to change and will be replaced as and when necessary with different benefits indicating eligibility . This change will not be subject to Cabinet approval. However a full and up to date list of benefits indicating eligibility will be available on the AVDC website.*

Guaranteed pension credit
Universal credit
Income based job seekers allowance
Income based employment and support allowance
Working tax credit and/or child tax credit where annual income for the purposes of the tax credit assessment was below £15,276

## List of benefits indicating eligibility for Discretionary DFG Top-up and Hospital Discharge Urgent Adaptations Grant

Guaranteed pension credit
Universal credit
Income based job seekers allowance
Income based employment and support allowance
Working tax credit and/or child tax credit where annual income for the purposes of the tax credit assessment was below £15,276
Council tax rebate

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## **Appendix 2: Summary of grant/loan purpose, eligibility criteria and conditions**

*Note: This information is an illustrative guide only and may be subject to change following legal consultation and prior to the production of procedural documentation for the individual grants and loans below.*

### **1. Essential Repairs Grant**

#### ***Purpose***

To provide essential repairs to make a non-decent home safer for vulnerable occupants. The maximum level of funding available is £10,000.

#### ***Applicant eligibility***

- The applicant must not be eligible for a Flexible Home Improvement Loan
- Available for homeowners in receipt of a means tested benefit specified in appendix 1. Where a property is jointly owned all parties must meet this financial criteria.
- Applicants must have owned their property for a minimum of 2 years at the time of application.
- The property must be occupied on a permanent basis by the applicant and their family.
- An HHSRS rating of the property must identify a category 1 hazard or multiple category 2 hazards that pose a risk to health
- Eligible works to address Category 1 and/or 2 hazards must be carried out within 12 months of the date of approval
- For work up to £10,000 two quotes are to be obtained by the Client and supplied to the Council. The Council will award funding equivalent to the cheapest quote provided.
- The payment of the grant funding will not be made until the work has been completed in a satisfactory manner and the Council is provided with an appropriate invoice.
- Payment will be made to the homeowner. It is the homeowner's responsibility to pay contractors for any works carried out to the property.

#### ***Eligible works***

Works deemed as necessary to remedy Category 1 and/or Category 2 hazards under the HHSRS to make the property safe, warm and watertight.

#### ***Conditions***

A legal land charge will be placed on the property equivalent to the assistance level provided. This must be repaid in full if the property is sold or the owner ceases to occupy the property.

The maximum amount of funding that can be provided within any 5 year period is £10,000.

## **2. Discretionary DFG top-up**

### ***Purpose***

To top-up the Mandatory DFG where the cost of essential works exceeds the maximum grant. The maximum level of discretionary DFG top-up available is £20,000.

### ***Applicant eligibility***

- Where a mandatory DFG has been approved and the cost of the necessary works exceeds the maximum grant level then the Council will use the following method to assess eligibility:

Assess the applicant's ability to afford the excess over the mandatory grant amount by carrying out a means test of their resources (see Appendix 1). This will include a means test of the resources of parents of disabled children applying for discretionary DFG top-up funding.

- Where the applicant is a tenant in a Registered Provider property no discretionary DFG top-up funding will be provided.
- A cost benefits analysis of the options available including moving to a more suitable property must be carried out

### ***Eligible works***

Works that have received approval for a mandatory DFG and that exceed the maximum grant funding

### ***Conditions***

Where the applicant is an owner occupier a legal land charge will be placed on the property equivalent to the assistance level provided. This must be repaid in full if the property is sold or the owner ceases to occupy the property within 10 years of the grant being provided.

Payment of the discretionary top-up will be made when works that were deemed necessary by the OT to meet the disabled persons needs have been completed and signed off by a Building Control officer and this has been provided to the Council.

## **3. Relocation Grant**

### ***Background***

On occasion a disabled person's property cannot be adapted, or the best option for a disabled person is to move rather than adapt the existing property. However some applicants are unable to do this as they have no means of funding the costs of moving house. At present the Council have no means to assist with these costs.

### ***Purpose***

To provide financial assistance to applicants (who are eligible for a mandatory grant) to relocate to a more suitable home. The maximum relocation grant would be £30,000.

### ***Applicant eligibility***

- Applicant must be a disabled person who would be eligible for a mandatory disabled facilities grant
- The applicant must obtain an OT report for the Council that advises that the new home is suitable to fully meet (or have the potential to meet) the needs of the disabled person and their family
- Rehousing must be deemed to be the most suitable and cost effective option by both the OT and the Council.
- In some cases valuations of the new home and the old home may be required.

### ***Eligible Works***

The necessary additional cost of acquiring housing suitable to meet the needs of the disabled person (difference between the sale price of the old home and the purchase price of the new home).

Legal fees incurred by the applicant in connection with the sale and purchase of their home

Stamp duty on the cost of the new home

Necessary and appropriate estate agent, home improvement agency and survey fees and any other professional fees as approved by the Council

Removal costs

Adaptation costs to make the new home suitable for the disabled person as recommended by an OTs report to the Council

### ***Conditions***

Where the applicant is an owner occupier a legal land charge will be placed on the property equivalent to the assistance level provided. This must be repaid in full if the property is sold or the owner ceases to occupy the property within 10 years of the grant being provided.

Payment of the relocation grant will be made on completion following the submission of appropriate evidence to the Council e.g. invoices, estimates.

## **4. Landlord Loan Scheme**

### ***Purpose***

To provide incentives for landlords to improve the condition and standards within privately rented sector property in the Vale and increase the supply of privately rented properties available on the market. Improvements could include fire protection and means of escape

measures, energy efficiency measures and measures to address category 1 or multiple Category 2 hazards under the HHSRS scheme (as determined by the Council).

### ***Applicant eligibility***

Applicant must be a landlord and own the property

The property must be tenanted and let or available to let for a period of 5 years from the date of the payment of the loan

### ***Eligible works***

- Improvements to HMOs for exiting kitchen and bathroom facilities and fire precaution/escape works where they are statutorily required
- Installing or replacing central heating systems
- Energy efficiency works to insulate lofts, hot water tanks, pipes, cavity walls and other works as appropriate
- Bringing a property up to a reasonable state of repair – no Category 1 hazards present
- Home safety and security measures

### ***Conditions***

Should the Council carry out works in default or the landlord be prosecuted for non-compliance with legal requirements at the property within 5 years from the date of the payment of the loan then the loan must be repaid immediately.

The loan will be secured against the property and must be repaid in full within 5 years, or if the property is sold or the owner dies or goes into long-term residential care, whichever is the sooner.

One loan can be made per property every 10 years

## **5. Hospital Discharge Urgent Adaptations Grant**

### ***Background***

In some cases discharge from hospital can be delayed because an individual's home is no longer accessible. Hospital OTs report that this is primarily because the individual cannot gain access or egress to or from the property or because they are unable to climb stairs to access a WC. Delayed discharge from hospital results in bed-blocking and significant costs to the NHS as well as delaying an individual's return to their home environment.

### ***Purpose***

To provide financial assistance of up to £10,000 to applicants to carry out urgent adaptations (ramp and/or stair lift) to their home to facilitate hospital discharge. Any subsequent non-urgent adaptations e.g. access to washing facilities, would be processed via the mandatory DFG process on discharge from hospital.

### ***Applicant Eligibility***

- Applicant must be in hospital at the time of referral and awaiting discharge.
- Available for owner occupiers and private rented sector tenants who are in receipt of a means tested benefit specified in appendix 1. Where the applicant is child, one parent must be in receipt of a means tested benefit.

### ***Eligible Works***

Urgent adaptation works to the property to facilitate safe access and egress to and from the property and access between levels within the property.

### ***Conditions***

Application must be accompanied by a referral from a hospital OT advising of the urgent adaptations that are required to the home to facilitate discharge.

That the property is occupied on a permanent basis by the applicant and their family

Payment of the grant will be made when works that were deemed necessary by the OT to meet the individuals needs have been completed and evidence of this provided to the Council.

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