



Report for

Sustainable Community Strategy

On Behalf of the Buckinghamshire
Local Strategic Partnerships

Prepared by The Halo Works Ltd
Revised August 2009

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All the items in italics are actual quotes from the focus groups. They are there to illustrate certain points, and need to be used carefully when quoted out of context.

Note: The basis for this consultation was focus groups. In some cases these groups were relatively small and the views expressed by the residents who took part in these groups do not necessarily represent the views of all residents living in the district.

Background

The objective of this consultation was to inform and refine the development of the five Buckinghamshire Sustainable Community Strategies covering each of the four districts and the County, prior to publication later this year.

The consultation centred on talking to a number of different ‘seldom heard’ groups within each of the districts and examining what each of these groups felt about the priorities already identified for their area and identifying whether there were any gaps in the priorities. The discussions also focused on understanding how people are affected by the key issues in their area and how this impacts on their lives. As well as the issues facing the residents, the groups also explored what action people would like to see being taken by the public, private sector and other community groups to support them.

One of the other objectives was to determine and identify what are the ‘calls to action’ that could be promoted by local people within their own communities. This was a much harder conversation to have with the groups as many of the residents we spoke to do not feel a sense of empowerment in their lives. In particular, many of the elderly, disabled and young people we met feel there is far more scope for action from their local public service providers.

In each district, four focus groups were conducted involving residents from one of the ‘seldom heard’ groups identified by the individual strategic partnership. The composition of these groups differed slightly across the districts as follows:

| District | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Aylesbury Vale | Elderly | People with disabilities | Young people# | BME |
| Chiltern | Over 60's | People with disabilities | Young people | BME* |
| South Bucks | Elderly | People with disabilities | Young people | Parents |
| Wycombe | Elderly | People with disabilities | Young people | BME |

This group was not facilitated The Halo Works Ltd

* This segment was split into two groups. One group involving Pakistani males, the other females.

Each of these groups was recruited in a number of different ways and some of these were more successful than others. The methods used included using databases supplied by Buckinghamshire County Council, Age Concern, Youth Council's, and Officers from each of the individual authorities as well as numerous representative and community based organisations. One other organisation that supported this project was Dial-a-Ride who contributed to the project by providing elderly residents, who needed it, with transport to/from the venues in all of the districts.

The recruitment via the Youth Council's worked very well with well attended and engaged young people. In general, the recruitment of the disability group using the Citizens' Panel was successful when it was used in conjunction with contacts from a number of the specific disability organisations. The elderly residents's group was not quite as successful and perhaps we could review whether there was a better option than Age Concern if these groups were repeated. Certainly, the ‘younger’ older person's group held in Chiltern was easier to recruit and the profile of residents was very different.

Overall Key Points

A number of key points were made by residents that apply to the development of the strategy document at both a County and District level:

- In the main residents agree with the priorities for their area, there was little or no argument with the themes put forward and the various levels of detail in each document.
- However their main concern is that they have little evidence that public service providers are able to deliver and they do not feel confident that things are likely to change. Many complain that “all providers do now is talk about what they are going” to do whereas they would like to see more action. Most of the people we met still like the area they live in, even if some feel it’s not quite as good an area as it was in the past and they would welcome the emergence of a “guardian organisation” that will take the lead in developing the future of their local communities. This could be the local partnerships in each area, although awareness of these bodies is low.
- When people look at the list of priorities, they think of the issues in terms of their individual towns, villages and in some case neighbourhoods. It is very difficult for residents living in Chalfont St Peter to be really interested in what’s going on in Chesham nor are those living in Dadford interested in developments in Aylesbury. Ideally, the strategy document needs to deliver at a local, local level working with specific neighbourhoods and small groups of residents with service providers working alongside local people to deliver positive changes for local communities.
- There is a huge scepticism that the list of priorities is merely a ‘wish list’ containing a lot of words, some of which they describe as “jargon”. This leads to a concern that many of the priority statements are too broad and as a result nothing specific will change or be done.
- The residents want the partners to succeed and they agree that if these priorities were addressed their respective areas would be better places to live, work in and visit. One of their key questions is ‘how’ are the Partnerships going to achieve these?
- There were some great positive stories from people whose lives had changed once they had been connected with some of voluntary organisations working in the community. Many of the disabled people have ongoing support or know where they can receive support as and when they need it. Some of the very elderly residents feel very lucky to be able to use the Age Concern’s befriender service. Organisations like these play an important role in keeping people in touch with the outside world and helping people with small practical issues that make their lives easier.
- Residents are concerned that the personality of the market towns and villages, which are an important characteristic of Buckinghamshire is being seriously eroded through poor, uncoordinated planning decisions. They mention things like; excessive parking restrictions, increasing traffic congestion, the demise of shops in outlying villages and the perceived decline of many of their high streets.
- Across all the four areas, local public service providers are not seen as enablers of positive change. A number of residents highlighted examples where they were perceived as the complete opposite. Many people now readily associated their local

providers with greater levels of bureaucracy and regulation. There are examples of good practice and community leadership but the undercurrent of opinion from many of the groups was that service providers are now more accountable to external authorities rather than to residents. Added to this dynamic is that people feel less able to effect changes in their communities than in the past.

- For some of the elderly residents and people with disabilities, social isolation is a real issue. Public bus transport is hard to access and is limited both in terms of the places it serves and the times of day it operates. Access is also limited through economic reasons. This feeling of isolation is magnified if the person doesn't have relatives living nearby who can help out. Most had given up driving a long time ago. Many had neighbours who do their best to help but often they are also elderly or have health issues of their own to deal with. In several groups we met people who admitted they rarely venture out of their homes apart from occasional shopping trips and their attendance at the groups was hugely appreciated. The befriender service supported by Age Concern is a brilliant service but not everyone knows about it, who could benefit from it.
- Residents would like to see more accountability and more ownership for each of the priorities discussed in the groups. They would also like to see some staged timing milestones put in place along with details of the actions that have been implemented that demonstrate to residents that progress is being made towards the final 'life' of the strategy document in 2025.
- Very few of the people we met feel that 'partnership working' delivers. Many feel that the individual organisations do not talk to each other and simply follow separate agendas. Residents want to see more examples of joined up thinking and actions. The awareness of the presence of Strategic Partnerships in the districts was almost non-existent. There needs to be more visibility given to examples where the benefits of this joined up working has produced results for local communities.
- In some cases, largely South Bucks and northern parts of Aylesbury Vale, there is a need to review whether some public services are too orientated around political boundaries rather than based around residents' needs. For people living in villages such as Iver, Stoke Poges and Burnham, who are reliant on public transport, these services are geared towards taking people to places such as Slough and Uxbridge, however these fall outside of the remit of South Bucks. There was a feeling that the services for the elderly were much better in Berkshire than in South Bucks and as a result they believed they were missing out because of where they lived. Similarly, moving or centralising any kind of service closer to Aylesbury (e.g. closure of Chesham Community Hospital) made it almost impossible for anyone living in Chiltern and South Bucks to access it unless they had their own transport.
- Above all there is a need to celebrate the successes. A number of people mentioned individual small projects taking place in their area that were addressing local people's needs however hardly anyone else in the same group knew about them. This included the Village Appraisal in Chalfont St. Peter. The messages about what is already being achieved at a community level, whether they are directly or indirectly supported by public service providers is still largely unheard.

*"I feel very lucky because there is lots going on around here."
Farnham Royal resident*

Aylesbury Vale District

Older Residents

This group were recruited by Age Concern and was well attended. There was a huge lack of empowerment amongst the people we met. They were all heavily dependent on local service providers including Age Concern and they didn't feel they could be part of the solution in making Aylesbury Vale a better place to live. A number of residents felt excluded from local services because of their financial means, as they had too much money to be included in the means tested services but still had needs which needed to be met by service providers. They believed that if a person had a need the service should be available and resented this restriction.

“How can we help you and what can you give us?”

There was a feeling amongst certain residents in the group that some organisations were only interested in you if you could afford to pay for a service (e.g. call aider), and that services for the elderly were less based on need than the ability to pay.

Some people believed that ageism was a big issue in the district with services more geared towards the younger generations. Many of the people we met feel isolated and excluded. They rely on their neighbours and word of mouth to find out what services might be available or what's going on locally as much as organisations such as Age Concern calling them. This group wanted to be regularly given information and they were concerned that there may be other services available to them but that they do not know where to look. One person wondered if they should be talking to someone or a specific organisation to find out what support is out there or whether there was an organisation that was looking out for them.

This group were too dependent on existing services to feel any connection with the strategy document or feel they could contribute to any of the objectives highlighted in it.

Key Points

- Want more information about local services for their age group.
- Feel isolated and therefore remote from the services provided. The group we met had low levels of citizenship or a view they were able to contribute to their community. Their main concern was looking after their own health and well-being.
- Organisations like Age Concern do a great job in the absence of more state funded services. The role of neighbours and relatives is also crucial in helping people feel connected with their communities and peer groups.

People with Disabilities

We had just four respondents for this group, which was lower than we would have liked, however they engaged in a lively debate and had plenty to say.

This group felt cut off but to a lesser extent than the older residents. Their main concern was that they didn't feel that the Strategy Document was written with their views in mind. Ideally, they would have liked to see a sub document specifically addressing the

aspirations of people with disabilities. Reference in the documents was made to the 2012 Olympics but not to the Paralympics also to several at risk health conditions but not to any disabilities.

The concerns of many of this group were practical ones in terms of issues, which prevented them from getting around easily. Roads and pavements were often in a poor condition or slippery and overhanging vegetation and narrow pavements were obstacles to their movement around the area. They want to see increasing the coverage of Dial A Ride into the evenings, the validity of blue badge holders after 6pm, better street lighting and better management of traffic speeds particularly where people are trying to cross roads in rural areas.

In the villages, the smaller village shops often didn't have doors wide enough to allow wheelchair access and some people lived too far away from their bus stops to be able to get to the buses to use them. Those familiar with Aylesbury said that the new bus station along with the railway station were missed opportunities to create transport infrastructure that fully met the needs of those with different disabilities.

There was widespread criticism of the design of footpaths lying directly alongside cycle paths and the new town centre development now meant that vehicles and pedestrians shared the same level, which was considered to be very dangerous.

“The architects and the views of residents are not usually the same. As a result some of the practical issues get lost when a design is turned into bricks and mortar”

Of the four groups involving people with disabilities held across the district, this was perhaps the most negative of the groups, not because the issues in their lives were any worse than people living elsewhere but that they had less confidence in the ability of public service providers to make their district any better. There was large-scale scepticism about the strategy document and they didn't feel their needs were likely to be addressed or taken into account.

Key Points

- This group feel excluded by the Strategy Document and would like ideas about how could this be resolved.
- Disabled people would like more support from the public service providers in enforcing some of the regulations already at their disposal, or think through more carefully some of the practical challenges when re-designing public infrastructure.

Young People

This group was facilitated by AVDC as part of one of their Youth Council sessions.

These young people were very positive about living in Aylesbury Vale and engaged with the Community Strategy document. They liked the sporting and leisure facilities, the proximity to places such as London and Oxford and the feeling of community that existed particularly in the rural villages. They also appreciated the opportunities they had to contribute to the future of the area in which they lived such as volunteering.

The group were concerned about how the area was going to develop and as to how the planned housing development would impact on the local green areas. In common with other groups, not everyone was happy with the condition of Aylesbury town centre and

others serious concerns included drug use (Walton Court/Southcourt) and increasing anti social behaviour including 'a gang culture' that was growing (Elmhurst).

One of their main concerns was to ensure that the skills of young people were being continually developed to meet the needs of employers. There was an understanding that there was an increase in the number of younger people seeking employment. Improving transport links was also vital especially for young people living in rural areas.

The Youth Council has members who live across the district. A number of people commented that any reference in the document to Aylesbury was likely to increase a commonly held belief that the focus of the authorities in on Aylesbury with other areas across the district in need of improvements missing out.

In terms of the Sustainable Environment, young people saw that schools/colleges should be encouraged to do more to support the reduction of waste and to increase recycling. Through the actions of their children, parents might be more prepared to do more.

Young people did not feel that the fear of crime was a serious concern to them. They saw it more as an issue promoted by the media and targeted towards older people. There were some crime issues in some areas of the district but by no means was it a widespread issue across the district.

The Youth Council felt that people from different backgrounds already got on well together in the area. The consensus was that as the current generation of young people got older, community relations within the different community groups would get stronger.

Key Points

- This group of residents feel they can make a difference and hopefully this sense of positivity is shared by their classmates across the district. They worry about the isolation felt in the outlying areas and think that transport and connections across the district are a key thing, which the council should focus on.
- They are concerned about the impact of the proposed new housing development especially on the green and open spaces in the district. They don't share the same concerns about how this build will impact on local infrastructure although they can see that many roads are already congested. They have faith in public service providers being able to take the right decisions and to do their best for their area.

BME Group

This was lively group with residents from both the Asian and Afro Caribbean communities and with people both young and old. There was quite a divergence in views between the younger and older residents. Those who have lived in Aylesbury for a long time were content with the progress made in integrating the respective communities and they were now settled into living in Aylesbury.

Not everyone was happy with the way the town was developing and with the quality of shopping opportunities in the town but in the main it worked for them. The younger people we met were more restless. They couldn't easily see what the benefits of living in Aylesbury were and their aspirations were very different. They were now looking at places such as Luton, Milton Keynes and London as setting the benchmark of what they wanted their local town to offer in terms of things to do and other opportunities and Aylesbury did not match up to these expectations.

The residents felt that even within their respective communities, people were becoming more dispersed, which had both benefits and disadvantages. The family unit, widely considered to be a strength of people from Asian backgrounds is not quite as strong an influence on the younger generations as in the past. Through different education and economic circumstances many now see their future as being outside of the district.

Key Points

- Celebrate the success stories and good work that is already taking place in the area. The work which has been undertaken at Quarendon School between young people and the community was mentioned as one area which ought to be celebrated as a success.
- People have concerns about the pressures on infrastructure, the state of the town centre and transport links like everyone else.
- Some of the resources required to support family break ups in Asian families (Refuge Centres) are not set up to the levels available in other major towns.

Overall Thoughts on Sustainable Community Strategy – Aylesbury Vale

| Key Themes | Aylesbury Vale District |
|---|--|
| Thriving Economy | <p>This is a key theme for this district given the future development planned for the area. A number of people saw the objectives mentioned in the document as excluding the needs of existing residents and focusing too much on the interests of people living outside of the area. In many people's eyes there was already a gap in the infrastructure needs of the area. People were concerned about the decline of Aylesbury town centre with several well known high street brands already closing down. There was a concern that unlike in Milton Keynes, a close neighbour of Aylesbury, there was no big master plan or strategy, which was coordinating the future of the area. People want to feel confident that the public service authorities in charge have a joint plan and a vision, which they are all working towards and they stick to this. In terms of education, there was a feeling that the skills gap between local employers and the local workforce already existed and rather than doing something in the future this needed to be addressed now. Many people feel that the district is too car orientated and the lack of public transport links to the more rural communities is a significant issue for people more reliant on these services such as the elderly, disabled people and young people. Residents struggled to see a connection between tourism and Aylesbury Vale. One point on the 2012 Olympics, those from the disability group wanted to see a reference to the Paralympics part of which would be hosted in Stoke Mandeville.</p> |
| Sustainable Environment | <p>On this theme, residents found it difficult to reconcile the requirement to build lots of new homes in the area with the plan to build many of these in what residents described as a flood plain. They couldn't see how this strategy was considered to be addressing flood risk. Similarly, residents knew there was a need for more jobs in the area to be provided. There is a concern as to how the external pressures on Aylesbury Vale can be balanced with the needs of people already living in the area.</p> |
| Safe Communities: Being safe, feeling safe | <p>This is one of the themes where there is a split between the views of those living in Aylesbury and those living in the rural parts of the district. The younger people feel that in certain areas within Aylesbury, the misuse of drugs and alcohol is a significant problem. They also report an increasing 'gang' culture developing. Both the younger people and residents we met in the BME group feel that there is less togetherness amongst all the different local community groups living in the town. In the other groups residents were not happy with the priority centring on building resilience to extremism. They see this as a negative objective and not a motivating aim. Many of</p> |

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| | <p>the older residents saw the issue of anti social behaviour as one of the consequences of the dilemma parents now have. They feel that some of the authority has been removed from today's parents yet at the same time there is increasing pressure on parents to do more and take more control of their children.</p> |
| <p>Health and Well-being: Happier, healthier and longer lives</p> | <p>The young people felt these objectives covered many of their aspirations. For example, in the 6th Form students are not required to do any sport or PE in school and they feel this gap should be targeted. Those residents with a disability could not see any reference in this section to them. The document mentioned targeting at risk groups such as diabetes and heart disease but not people with disabilities yet their overall health and well-being was also important. Many people associate leisure services as being provided by external organisations, which people have to pay for so it's important that access is not limited by money or in the case of the rural communities by the lack of adequate public transport.</p> |
| <p>Cohesive Communities: Strong, confident and active communities</p> | <p>The rural communities, especially those in the north of the district feel far removed from what's happening in Aylesbury and in some cases from other surrounding towns. There is a strong feeling that the public service providers are too Aylesbury centric and they are left to their own devices. The lack of adequate public transport is a big issue for many residents living in these areas. Without a car people can easily feel very cut off from their local communities and the elderly and disabled often cannot even walk as far as to their local village bus stops. A number of the people in one group believed that people had become too passive in Aylesbury Vale and were not challenging the public service providers, especially the town planners, sufficiently strongly enough. Young people believe an important priority should be to strengthen the relationship between young people and local democracy. This included a greater understanding of the role of Councillors. In other groups there was some scepticism about how local decision-making works and a feeling that there was a lack of listening to local people.</p> |

Chiltern District

Older Residents

This group was recruited from the over 60's club rather than via Age Concern and as a result residents had a much higher level of independence than in some other groups.

The group split largely into two segments, those living in a town, in this case, Chesham and those living in villages. The needs of both areas were considered to be very different but equally just as important. Several of the people we met had lived in villages such as Chalfont St. Peter and Chalfont St Giles for many years and whilst they still liked the area they lived in, things were not the same as the used to be. Issues such as speeding traffic and congestion were now serious concerns.

These residents enjoyed village life and were keen that the advantages they associated with living in small communities i.e. friendly neighbours, local shops and green spaces should be encouraged to thrive despite increasing pressures on new developments. The introduction of payable parking in Chalfont St. Giles for example was considered to have done little to enhance the look of the village as now parking was widely dispersed across the village centre rather than just in one place.

Residents living in these villages were also concerned with anti-social behaviour and bemoaned the irresponsibility of some parents in the way they look after their children, rather than mentioning the lack of things to do for young people. They would love to see a return to the 'values' they felt were more prevalent when they were parents.

A number of people we met were involved in Village Appraisals, which had achieved several local successes particularly in Chalfont St. Peter. There was recognition that local people could make a difference to a local community and they appreciated the support given by Chiltern District Council. They wished more local people would get involved in the initiatives, however people agreed there was a frustratingly high level of ambivalence amongst many local residents, which only really altered if it directly affected someone on a personal basis. They also believed that the local media had showed little interest in reporting any 'good news' stories.

The view was that a 'local local' approach was a way forward for the way in which public service providers could work together with local people. This sense of preserving the individual identity of villages through developing an individual approach to addressing local issues was considered to be a good model to develop across the district.

Budgens in Chalfont St Peter was cited as being a great example of a successful local shop, which had flourished under new management with support from local people. It was also mentioned by someone we met in a group of elderly people in South Bucks as a shop that delivered groceries to local people without the need to have internet access.

Many of the people also recognised the benefits of having access to a car. Public transport was widely considered to be poor, irregular and costly and for the time being at least many were thankful they didn't have to rely on the service.

For those living in the towns, there was more to do on their doorstep, which was great, however Chesham was not considered to be the thriving town it once was. A number of shops had closed recently, the high street was becoming more dominated by charity

shops and there was a general feeling that things were not going well. These people relied on local transport so it was vital to them that the shops they wanted to use survived in Chesham. Buses services to/from other towns were in some cases irregular and in other very restrictive in terms of the amount of time you could spend shopping.

When it came to the type of buses used, older residents would prefer to see smaller vehicles used, which they felt were more appropriate to areas they were serving.

One other comment mentioned was that the costs of adult education were considered to be too high. In an economic period where more adults may have to seek retraining or develop new skills this was a training resource that was becoming increasingly less affordable when it potentially needed to be more accessible than ever.

Key Points

- Support and preserve the identity of local villages through encouraging resident led initiatives supported by the local public service providers
- Improve public transport. Provide more appropriate vehicles and improve timetabling.
- Support the local towns/villages. Older people find it much easier to shop locally.
- Removal of local services such as hospital beds hits hardest amongst those residents who are the least able to cope.

People with Disabilities

This group was well attended although perhaps over represented by people who were blind or who had other sight disabilities. The concerns of many of this group were practical ones in terms of issues, which prevented them from getting around easily.

These included: overhanging hedges and other shrubbery, the placing of advertising boards outside shops on pavements and the habit of painting lamp posts in grey rather in a colour that could easily be seen by people with sight problems.

There was widespread criticism of the quality of the surface on the pavements and roads, the presence of too many cyclists on pavements and for those who do have access to a car the abuse of the blue badge system in car parks. The smoking ban in public buildings meant there was more street furniture than ever which posed a greater threat to those walking on the pavements.

What these people would like is for the authorities to enforce the regulations that already exist covering all of these issues. If they did, they lives would feel a lot safer.

Some people commented on the taxi card systems, which in principal they all supported. It seems that not all taxis have the machinery in place to support the system or it doesn't always work when they do have due to operator error. Could a list of recommended taxi operators be supplied, who have the capability. that would make this scheme work more effectively for these groups of residents?

One of the people we met lived in a Leonard Cheshire supported home and he felt very lucky to have the support available when he needed it. He had access to a computer and other people. Other people we met lived at home and often felt very isolated. The loss of the sense of community in the district left people feeling more vulnerable as they

were left to fend for themselves. Public transport was also often not easy to use and relatively expensive especially for those receiving a disability benefit.

On a general note, people in this group wanted to see a better level of coordination between GP's, the hospital and community care providers to ensure that their individual needs were recognised and then delivered without further problems. One person gave an example whereby she had been released after a short spell in hospital in the early hours of the morning because they needed her bed. She had no transport, lived alone and had to use a taxi to get home. This was in issue in terms of cost and practicality.

The respondents in this group echoed the comments made in another district in that they are reliant on others to help them in their lives and they need information brought to them, as their lives are so difficult that they find it very tough to know where to start. Even the Chiltern Chronicle doesn't appear to be available on a disc for people with sight problems so finding out what's going on can be difficult. One positive comment was the Chiltern Disability Forum initiative, which is coordinated by Chiltern District Council.

Key Points

- This group are very dependant on local service providers. Any change in the orientation of a service such as Bucks Vision is likely to have an impact on someone somewhere.
- Disabled people would like more support from the public service providers in enforcing some of the regulations already at their disposal, which would help them deal with some of the practical issues they face on a day-to-day basis.
- This group appreciated that their views were being sought on the Strategy however; they were frustrated how long things took to change. Despite the DDA many building were still 'out of bounds' to wheelchair users, public transport was still not completely accessible and information was not equally available to everyone. With an ageing population in the district the need for a more integrated approach involving people with a disability or long standing illness or infirmity was likely to increase in future.

Young People

Three people came to this group, which was recruited through a local youth group. All three were girls and they lived in Chesham and as a result they appreciated all the things they could do locally. They liked the parks, the heated pool and the other local leisure services that were available. If we had met with young people living in some of the outlying villages perhaps their views on the area would have been different.

All used the buses to visit High Wycombe for shopping and they appreciated that they had a train station giving them wider access to places outside the area such as London.

It was difficult to get this group of young people engaged in the Strategy. They enjoyed their respective schools, their parents had jobs and they all had access to a car. They liked their local area as it worked for them at this stage of their lives. Not all could see themselves choosing to live in the area in the future not because they didn't like it but simply because they thought they would like to try living somewhere else.

One area which we did discuss was volunteering. This was something they all said they would like to get involved in. They didn't know what they could do and thought the idea of their schools offering opportunities for volunteering would be a good idea.

Key Points

- The language used in the document was seen as difficult to understand. The document is not written in a style that engages young people. If this is one of the intended audiences, more emphasis on specific outcomes would be a positive step.

BME Group

This community group was split into two focus groups. One group, involving male representatives from the local Pakistani population the other involving women.

The men we met largely felt that their community got along well with the other communities living in Chesham. Many of those we met had lived in the area for forty years and they had enjoyed living in a market town where jobs were freely available.

Some of their current concerns were about the shortages of local jobs since the closure of several manufacturing plants in the area and the detrimental effect this had had on the local town with shops closing. Their other major concern was the relatively poor performance of children from their community in the local school. They felt that a disproportionately lower percentage of children were getting into the grammar system from Chesham Park School, which was putting their children at a distinct disadvantage. They wanted this to be investigated and work done to examine how, if this is the case, they can help their children to do better at school. Many did not feel they could afford to employ additional tutors to help their children pass the 12+.

The people we met agreed that drug and alcohol misuse was also an issue within their community in common with the local population even though it might not be readily admitted. This is a sensitive subject, which needs to be addressed carefully.

They also felt that domestic violence is a problem in some families and they would like to see this being addressed as one of the priorities for the Strategy. More information and awareness needs to be given to people in their communities on these topics and the 'committee members' from the Mosque I met offered to help as much as they could. The main challenge seems to be to identify how support for anyone involved in any of these issues could be channelled to the people who need help. Not everyone goes to a Mosque.

Key Points

- Feel alienated from those who are thriving in the area with a fear that they and their children in particular might be missing out
- Would like to see local jobs for local people, and houses for rent to local people
- Greater provision for increasing the levels of understanding between the local communities. More non-religious based meetings away from Mosques and Churches. Broader understanding at all levels not just at organisational levels.

Pakistani Women

This group was facilitated by a female Policy Officer from Chiltern District Council and the residents, who took part, mainly comprised of females from a Muslim background.

The ladies group raised concerns relating to;

- The need for mentoring and support for young people attending school to reduce the numbers of children potentially failing to achieve suitable qualifications.
- As a result of their own educational attainment, parents expressed the need for learning support to enable them to understand and assist their child with homework.
- Whilst ladies swimming was welcomed there was a desire for more activities which the ladies could access i.e. Dedicated 'ladies only' Physique and other gym activities
- Facilities and activities that could attract the young people and provide opportunities to socialise and reduce the risk of them hanging around the streets where they may be at risk of being victims or perpetrators of crime and disorder.
- Repeated consultation with the community by various agencies, which do not result in changes or improvements in the range of facilities, activities, access to education, health care etc.
- The community feels that the Local Authorities, PCT and Police, don't understand the impact of their policies on the community as a result of a lack of understanding or knowledge of the Muslim culture or Religion.
- As a result of poor communication between the community and statutory organisations there is a feeling from the community that agencies are insensitive to their concerns.
- The Community Strategy seems to be fine with the ladies. However it is important that actions are delivered and seen to be delivered as a result of this strategy.

Overall Thoughts on Sustainable Community Strategy - Chiltern

| Key Themes | Chiltern District |
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| Thriving Economy | This is a key theme, however these groups took place in Chesham and people living there could not associate the term 'thriving economy' with the town. A number of manufacturing sites had closed down over the recent years and the town centre itself was struggling with the closure of local shops. A number of these sites still lay vacant and local people wanted to see more being done to encourage more business into the town and not redevelop these into more housing. People wanted local people to have the opportunities to have local jobs not be forced to move outside of the area. One other comment was the emphasis on improving the transport network not merely maintaining it. Many residents did not feel that the transport networks were good enough in particular public transport. Several people mentioned that there was a possible threat to the Chesham railway station, which was considered an important link to the outside world. The young people and the local Pakistani community especially, really value this link. |
| Sustainable Environment | As in other districts, some people struggled to see the relevance of this theme to a local strategic partnership. The priority mentioning the 'use of natural resources' was in particular considered by many to be very vague. People are very concerned about protecting their Green Belt and they are not entirely convinced that this always happens. One other comment on this section was that residents feel that when it comes down to the quality of roads and pavements, the authorities seek out cheaper, short lasting solutions, which fix the immediate problem and look good but don't last. Above all, residents want their Partnership to do things properly. |
| Safe Communities: Being safe, feeling safe | This section raised only a few comments. The one objective people would like to see included in this section is having more Police on the streets. Residents also wanted to see the role of schools and parents highlighted in the objectives in terms of restoring 'social respect' through perhaps the use of parenting classes or including social responsibilities as part of the curriculum in schools. The Pakistani male residents also feel that targeting domestic violence, which they admit may be an issue within parts of their community, should be included here. |
| Health and Well-being: Happier, healthier and longer lives | On this section some residents focused on the removal of the respite beds previously available at Chesham Hospital and the non-appearance of an X-ray facility at the HealthZone as examples whereby these objectives are already not being followed by public service providers. The promotion of personal health and well-being is seen as a personal responsibility for people and the authorities should support rather than lead on this issue. For those people who were elderly or disabled they |

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| | <p>didn't feel they now had the choice to enjoy good health and so the statements didn't apply to them anyway. Some residents said they would like to see a reference to giving more support being given to paid and unpaid carers included in this section.</p> |
| <p>Cohesive Communities: Strong, confident and active communities</p> | <p>Supporting the voluntary sector was very important for all the groups. Some people believed that this should be promoted within schools rather than expecting people to get interested and involved in this when they get close to retirement. The few young people we met at Chesham said they would be happy to help out for a few hours every so often if they knew what was required. The local action groups such as the one in Chalfont St. Peter were considered to be good examples of how local people can make a positive difference to their local community and people would like to see these successes being shared. There was feeling that there should be opportunities to communicate the outcomes and best practice across a district. The older residents would also like to see increased provision and support being given to residential care homes and sheltered housing for those unable to stay in their own homes. The Pakistani community said a lot had changed since 7/7 with lots more official contact between public service providers and representatives from their community, however there was a feeling that below these levels of engagement nothing much had changed and there was still only sporadic integration at a lower level between the local communities living in Chesham.</p> |

South Bucks District

Older Residents

This group was recruited by Age Concern. The villages represented were Burnham, Iver Heath, Stoke Poges and Farnham Common. The major difference between the residents was that the person living in Farnham Common had his own transport and he lived in the middle of the village. He loved it. He could shop easily and there was plenty to do.

“I feel very lucky that there is lots going on around here” Farnham Royal

The others, whose partners had now died, relied on their relatives or neighbours to help them with their shopping and other household needs. All felt they were cut off from others in their community and they had few lifelines at their disposal. For some of the people in the group, deteriorating health also meant they were unable to access their surrounding area in the same way as they had in the past.

In terms of access, whilst there were bus services in their villages, they lived too far away from the bus stops to be able to use the services. In one village, Stoke Poges there were no shops they could use and this lady really appreciated the delivery service provided by Budgens in Chalfont St Peter. Unlike Tesco, which also offers home delivery, you don't have to have access to the internet to use the Budgen's service. The only downside to using the service was that as she could not get to the shops and see any new product lines she tended to buy the same things every time.

For these residents, the befriender service offered by Age Concern was an invaluable service and they appreciated the human input it gave to their lives. There was a sense that these were three lonely women, where many of the advantages of living in village life earlier in their lives had now turned out to be causing them major life challenges.

“ I am so lonely where I live even though there are people all around me.”

Many of the residents were not aware what was going on for their age group in the area. They all believed that there were things orientated for family groups but not for them so finding out information is a challenge. They rely on 'word of mouth' to hear about things. When asked, everyone said they receive a copy of South Bucks Report. One lady had found out about monthly events, which she was now able to go to, however she had only found out about these social events by accident.

“I can't think there is much I can get involved in around here, so I don't.” Stoke Poges

One other practical issue, which was mentioned in this group and in others across the district, was the subject of the delivery of prescriptions. Some people appear to be able to have these delivered others don't, although the impression given is that all you have to do is ask. If this system does exist it needs to be more widely communicated to elderly or disabled people as it would make a real difference to those who find it difficult to get out. Not everyone finds it as easy to get a doctor to come to visit. Going to the GP's surgery is not always an option unless they can get help with transport to the building.

Key Points

- People would like more targeted information about what might be available in their area. Some also require transport and/or support from others to help build levels of self-confidence that would encourage people to feel they can join in.
- Improve access to public transport. Unless people live close to the bus stops, the length of walk from their homes could deter older people from being able to use the services even if they wanted to. The timetabling on some routes is also an issue.
- Support the local towns/villages. Older people find it much easier to shop locally. How can more people be given access to the home delivery of grocery shopping without the need to have internet access.

People with Disabilities

This group was well attended with a mix of people with varying kinds of disabilities from different parts of the district. They also had lots to say about their area.

Whilst most said they liked living in the area and in particular the 'green spaces' the area offered, there was sense of frustration that the benefits of living in the area they are loved were being slowly eroded over time though lack of foresight in planning decisions with little attention being paid to the wishes of local residents.

"The destruction of the integrity of our neighbourhoods is unacceptable"

In many respects the discussion we had during the group covered many issues not directly connected with disabilities. Residents were concerned by the lack of affordable housing in the district and by the regular demolition of old sites in places such as Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield being replaced by multiple blocks of flats. One suggestion was for the authorities to make better use of brownfield sites or clean up previously contaminated land and build affordable housing at these locations.

The condition of the road and pavement surfaces was widely criticised. One person with a sight disability living in Stoke Poges found it difficult to walk around her home because there were no streetlights and the conditions of the pavements was so poor. The amount of speeding traffic on the local roads was widely considered to be an issue. Crossing the roads was more difficult and life was more hazardous for the disabled.

Residents wanted to see better public transport for everyone including the use of more vehicles with disabled access and using bus stops where there was kerbside access. One of the residents lived in Taplow, which had no local shops. Her bus services were focused on Maidenhead, which with an irregular service of only three trips per day gave her little time free to shop in the town. The local railway station was also unmanned, which meant with a sight disability she couldn't use it if she was travelling on her own.

Another person said it was cheaper for her to use a taxi to/from Slough or Uxbridge rather than a bus so this gave little encouragement to use the public transport services.

"They expect us to pay for a service but never seem to ask us what we want or tell us what's happening"

One person mentioned the lack of a Disability Forum in South Bucks compared with the one operating in Chiltern and there was a feeling that the local authorities in this area

were not good at listening to any groups of residents including those with a disability. On a positive note, again everyone was aware of the South Bucks Report.

What residents said they wanted was a better dialogue with the local authorities. They wanted the public service providers to conduct an ongoing conversation with all residents including those with a disability about the future of the area.

Key Points

- This group are very dependant on local service providers. Having access to local shops, local public transport and other local amenities makes a real difference.
- Disabled people would like to have more dialogue with the local service providers about the type of services they need. Most of the people who came to the group were sociable and looked like they would be prepared to ask for help if they needed it. Not everyone has that same level of confidence.

Young People

This group took place in Denham and involved ten young people aged from ten to fourteen years of age during their Monday evening youth group session. The comments from this group are in no way considered to be representative of the views of older young people or those living in the smaller villages or areas such as Beaconsfield.

Most of the young people went to school at Chalfont Community College. They all seem to love Denham. It's green, the people are friendly, there are parks to go to and there are plenty of places where they can use their bikes or walk to. The buses work and although not everyone uses them, they can easily get to places such as Uxbridge for shopping.

Their world stopped at Denham even though they went to school in Chalfont St Peter, but it was great and they didn't really have any major concerns about the area.

The downsides were traffic congestion including lots of HGV's, speeding traffic the poor condition of some of the footpaths and dog mess. Their parents had cars so they had access to places outside of Denham if they needed to but above all, all their friends lived in Denham and that was the factor that mattered the most.

Key Points

- The Strategy document was not shown to these young people. It would not have been appropriate or in many cases relevant given the age of some of the young people we met nor easily understood.

Parents Group

This group took place at a SureStart Children's Centre in Iver. It proved to be a lively conversation despite the small numbers of people who attended. All were parents of young children aged 0-5 years. Many had only recently lived in the area.

Some of the new parents had lived in more urban areas before moving to this area so the proximity to green and open spaces was a positive and the area was relatively quiet. They liked the fact that there was some sense of 'community spirit' in the village.

There was sense of frustration that despite the will of local people to develop the sense of 'community spirit' of the two villages Iver and Iver Heath, this was being prevented rather than being facilitated by the District Authority. Local people wanted and supported the opening of a Community Café, the local MP had given his support to the plan, a building to use had been identified however, and without any real explanation the planning application had been rejected on a 'technicality'.

The evidence for this group was that the local authorities far from being enablers were blockers of change and community development. They were quite annoyed and didn't trust the local politicians. As a result they had little confidence in the ability of the local service providers to be able to deliver against the long list of objectives highlighted in the strategy document or evidence that they had delivered in the past.

In these two villages, excess traffic and HGV's were serious problems and for those trying to cross the main roads with pushchairs it was a major concern. Both villages are close to Slough and the feeling was that there was a lot more going on in Berkshire for people in their life stage than there was in South Bucks.

Most of those we met had access to a car. The others said that local bus services were poor and there was little to do for older children and teenagers living in the area. Older children tend to get bussed to their schools from the villages so their connection with their home communities is more remote. This can lead to some issues.

One other positive comment was that parents appreciated the farm shop, Wingroves, as it gave them the opportunity for local people to buy fresh produce and meats from the butcher there rather than from one of the main supermarkets.

Key Points

- The affordability of children's after school clubs and holiday clubs is a concern. There is a concern that economic reasons could prevent some parents from being able to take advantage of some of the children's facilities that might be available.
- The parents would like to see more action being taken to minimise the impact that HGV's and speeding traffic are having on their local villages.
- More direct support is required to keep the local villages 'alive'. Parents would like evidence that the public service authorities can be enablers in their community and support local residents when the opportunity arises.

Overall Thoughts on Sustainable Community Strategy – South Bucks

| Key Themes | South Bucks District |
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| Thriving Economy | <p>This is a key theme and the discussions highlighted some contradictions within the district. Many of those we spoke to feel the area is already ‘thriving’ enough with great pressure being placed on the local infrastructure. There is a concern that unless this is developed, and not everyone wants to see this being improved, the area will not be able to take the strain. A number of people were concerned that with the price of land in South Bucks meant it was unrealistic to expect developers to provide affordable housing. Some people suggested cleaning it up and using previously contaminated land in order to provide cheaper housing for local people. The need for improved education standards and skills development was considered to be urgent in order to give future generations the best possible employment opportunities. One of the most important priorities was considered to be protecting local village life and helping the regeneration of villages that were in danger of losing or had already lost local amenities.</p> |
| Sustainable Environment | <p>The main comments mentioned in connection with this section were the proposed Pinewood development plan and the Third Heathrow runway. People cannot recall their local authorities opposing the building of the third runway and they are concerned that the same authorities will be swayed by commercial pressures rather than listening to the views of local residents when it comes to the Pinewood plan. Throughout the conversations with residents there was an undercurrent of feeling that the authorities in South Bucks do not listen to the views of local residents and were more interested in helping stakeholders who live outside the area. The issue of HGV’s is a big problem. It was mentioned by residents living in Denham, Iver and Iver Heath. It’s not a new problem to the area, however as people haven’t seen anything being done to address these concerns in the past they are not confident the future will be any different.</p> |
| Safe Communities: Being safe, feeling safe | <p>This section raised only a few comments. The one objective people would like to see included in this section is having more Police on the streets. Residents living in local villages are frustrated by the loss of the village policemen. The temporary closure of the police station in Gerrards Cross was also mentioned. It’s apparently being refurbished but the people we met had no idea if or when it would be re-opened.</p> |
| Health and Well-being: Happier, healthier and longer lives | <p>This theme generated much discussion. Some people found it difficult to reconcile the objective to give residents access to services and support with the decision to move some services for mental health and children’s services out of the area.</p> |

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| | <p>Similarly, in the older residents group reference was made to wardens being removed from sheltered housing accommodation, which simply put more pressure on existing public services such as the police and ambulance crews. Parents want to see a greater provision of affordable children's clubs during the holidays. Residents saw the objective of tackling obesity as an individual responsibility decision rather than something a Partnership should be allocating resources to.</p> |
| <p>Cohesive Communities: Strong, confident and active communities</p> | <p>The sense of community is very important to the villages in South Bucks. Not everyone understands what the term 'community identity' really means although the general view was that most villages used to have it but many had now lost it. There was no recent evidence that the local public service authorities saw this as being something they wished to address and in fact in one village, Iver, residents cited a recent example where a planning decision taken by the District Council had prevented the opening of a community café in the village. Many residents believe that there is more scope to encourage volunteering although many of the people I met were now more likely to be recipients of this help rather than 'givers'. There was some doubt that the Partnership would be able to encourage local businesses to take part in volunteering. People also wanted to see some reference to supporting the role of carers within the document. There is a real issue of rural isolation in some villages. Not all villages have local shops and even when there is a public bus service, many older people find it too difficult to walk the distance to the bus stop to use the services. The other characteristic of South Bucks is that many people live much closer to areas such as Slough and Uxbridge than to the major populations centres of Buckinghamshire. The public transport is also focused on getting people to/from these towns in Berkshire and Hillingdon, yet, because of the political boundaries services for the elderly and for people with disabilities in both areas are unavailable to anyone living in one of these smaller South Bucks villages.</p> |

Wycombe District

Background

The groups were recruited using different contacts and methods with varying success. What became apparent from the first group, and each of the other groups, with the exception of the young people's group, was how much the consultation was required. It was necessary to allow the respondents to talk about their issues, which in each case were very significant, before we could get in to the main body of the debate.

There is a great deal of dissatisfaction with service provision, at all levels, and we had to overcome these issues before we could get into the main body of the discussions. Once we overcame these issues we were able to debate successfully the Sustainable Strategy, although even then, those with many issues still found it tricky as much of the time their own problems overwhelm them, and the need to make sure they are heard before they can talk about bigger ideas.

“They forget about us, they are just spending all their time trying to save money.”

The Findings

The residents of Wycombe who we saw are mainly dissatisfied with the services, which they receive. They feel overlooked and isolated in many cases and feel that their needs have been forgotten by service providers. There is a sense that the service providers are more concerned about their own needs, targets and requirement to save money, than actually delivering services to those in the district that require their help.

These were very challenging groups to moderate as there was so much upset and in some cases anger, however they were exceptionally valuable and a number of tactical things came out which it may be worth the council looking at as quick fixes as well as some longer term thinking alongside the Sustainable Strategy.

Despite the resident's lack of satisfaction with services most felt the Sustainable Community Strategy was a sensible document with worthwhile aims. In the main most people agreed with the aims it discussed and no one suggested that there were key things missing.

Elderly Residents

This group was recruited by Help the Aged and only three people came. The three who came had a number of issues, both health related and loneliness. There is a feeling that once you get old in Wycombe you are on your own. Services are expensive to access and often because their children received a good education in Buckinghamshire they have thrived in their jobs which means they tend to live a long way from their parents and find little time to visit. Information is seen as thin on the ground, and not in the places where elderly people frequent and therefore unavailable. There is a sense that they should be on the receiving end of services rather than contributing in any way. They feel aggrieved when they are expected to pay, what they see as large sums for services, which they expect to be provided.

Social services are not considered a good provider of services. They have moved to a telephone based “service”. Where someone rings and asks if there is anything, which the individual needs, but then is not able to do anything about the requirements of the elderly person. This groups felt that calling elderly people is of very little value as what they need is company and practical hands on help. They would prefer either a visit once a year or no calls when there can be no help after the call.

The ideas of the Sustainable Strategy to this group were a long way outside what they saw as their remit. Respondents felt the things on the strategy were important and correct, and that the council should be doing them anyway and were slightly baffled at why they were asked about it, when so many of their basic needs were not being met.

Key Points

- Want better information and it provided in a face to face environment
- Recycling is very difficult for this group as the boxes, cannot be carried when using a stick or walking frame
- Dial a ride is perceived as too expensive to use regularly, feel that it is not supported by the council
- Feel isolated and therefore remote from services provided

“The council should be able to make these decisions themselves, they should see us, and understand our issues and take them into account when making up these plans.”

People with Disabilities

This group was very well attended. We recruited it with help from Buckinghamshire County Council Residents’ Panel. The range of disabilities was wide, from those with life limiting illnesses to those with MS and degenerative diseases. Everyone who came had mobility problems and significant issues which they face on a daily basis. Again this group felt undervalued, under serviced and in many ways angry at service provision and overall assistant which they receive. Most thought that the providers were doing everything they could to make their lives difficult rather than helping and this was deeply frustrating for this articulate and resourceful group.

It was possible to have a conversation about the plans with this group and they were interested in all the ideas put forward. However, because of their own poor experiences of service provision they were very dubious that any of it would be fulfilled. This lack of trust overshadowed their positivity about the forward looking nature of document, and they tended to see the problems associated with making the ideas suggested happen.

This group have plenty of time to think, and they analyse what they see around the area and apply that analytical thinking to the way they are treated. This made them a really interesting bunch to spend time with as all of their ideas have been well thought through. What everyone agreed was that each of them felt as though they had been left out of service provision. What taking part in the group showed them was that they were not alone and everyone agreed this helped cope with their feelings of isolation. They realised they needed a forum like this one to help them overcome some of the issues they have accessing services.

Bucks Carers used to offer an excellent service, which apparently has been disbanded and not replaced. This along with the huge administrative job of being disabled and needing to claim benefits, blue badges and general help has created a significant amount of stress for people. What the respondents in this group said was that they need information brought to them, as their lives are so difficult that they find it very tough to know where to start. They want to be a part of the plans for the area, but need it to be in a way which works for them, at the moment they feel excluded and this leads to large amounts of disenchantment.

“To me this is just window dressing. They just make decisions which affect our already difficult lives without asking us what works best, and then expect us to just get on with it which, because of our disabilities mainly we have to.”

Key Points

- This group appear to feel they have paid a heavy price in the cost cutting and service orientation of service providers locally over the last three to four years. They want to be properly consulted about what they need and would like to feel that they can make a useful contribution to the area.
- Having to pay and display with a blue badge in one of the car parks is very difficult for some. If the resident is in a wheelchair it is too high to reach the machine, and the machines are a long way away from the disabled parking spaces, meaning that just getting the ticket is tough for those with mobility issues.
- People with disabilities need hands on help. Filling in forms is hard for them and they rely so heavily on the benefits they receive that they become very stressed at the thought of filling in the forms correctly. This group felt that in order for the ideas in the Sustainable Strategy to properly work they need to be a part of the overall delivery and there are some very basic things, which need to happen in order for them to feel they are included.

“I think about what I can achieve, not what I can’t, however so many of the things which have happened recently from the council stop me from achieving things, and that feeling is debilitating in itself.”

Young People

The group of young people were excellent. They were good fun, well connected to the council and keen to be part of a good solution. They were on the Youth Council and this showed in the discussions we had as they felt empowered to make a difference. We had a full debate about the key themes and everyone agreed that not only were the themes the right ones, but the detail behind each one was sensible and well thought out too.

Some members of the group were more optimistic than others about the ability of the council and other service providers to deliver on the plan. Most agreed that if 50% of the plan could be delivered that would be an excellent result.

Most important to this group were ideas around economic issues and safer communities. The other three areas of Sustainable Environment, Health and Well-being and Cohesive Communities were felt to be somewhat outside the council’s remit and perhaps left alone for individuals to manage themselves. This group were clear about what they felt were

the issues where local Government should be involved and where they should steer away. What they group wanted was a lead by example from Wycombe and local service providers rather than targets and campaigns.

An example given of how they felt this should work was health and well-being. They felt the town had been badly treated when key hospital services had been moved to Stoke Mandeville making it difficult to visit people when they were in hospital. If they want a cohesive community who helps one another because it is easy to do so. Having a hospital forty minutes drive away means that visiting is difficult and few people would offer to drive an elderly neighbour such a distance.

“Climate change has nothing to do with local councils and nor should it. It just stops them thinking about things which are really important and doing those.”

Key Points

- This group are clear that they have received a very good education and that they live in an area, which is well connected. They worry about the isolation felt in the outlying areas and think that transport and connections across the district are a key thing, which the council should focus on. If, because of the Sustainable Strategy this occurs then that will be a good thing.
- Younger people want to feel that they are living in a fair and free society. They worried that the Strategy might just be another document, which did little except tie people in the council in knots and stop them from delivering what they see as the important work of the council.
- The language used in the document was seen as difficult to understand. The words cohesive and sustainable were felt to be misused and the younger people would like to see clearer, more concise language to describe the outcomes the strategy is there to deliver.

BME Group

This group proved to be exceptionally difficult to recruit. The racial equality team at Wycombe took on the task and worked hard but still only two people came, a husband and wife. They were good respondents but it is difficult to write findings from one family of respondents with any certainty. Their key points were:

- Worried that the service in the area were geared towards other people not themselves
- Feel alienated from those who are thriving in the area
- Would like to see local jobs for local people, and houses for rent to local people

Overall Thoughts on Sustainable Community Strategy - Wycombe

| Key Themes | Wycombe District |
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| Thriving Economy | This is a key theme and everyone agreed that this was a vital and important area for the council and other service providers to focus effort. The only slightly contentious point was the desire to promote the area as a centre for tourism. It was felt to be unlikely that the area could ever be a magnet for tourism and there were better things for the partnership to spend time on. |
| Sustainable Environment | This created a significant amount of debate. Most people felt this was not something which should take too much of the council's focus. It was felt that the lead on these issues should be central Government and not left to local authorities to manage. The item on this section which each group thought was vital was the focus on the transport infrastructure. |
| Safe Communities: Being safe, feeling safe | This section was interesting for people to discuss but no group felt it was a serious issue in the area and wondered why it was highlighted as a key theme. A number of people mentioned the need to "design out" crime and liked the idea of future proofing the area. |
| Health and Well-being: Happier, healthier and longer lives | When we showed this part of the strategy many of the groups felt that it didn't apply to them. Those who were older, with disabilities and to some extent the young people we saw thought it had little to do them. They felt the things mentioned here were individual responsibilities rather than something, which service providers should be trying to manage. This particularly applied to promoting healthy lifestyles. Everyone could see the need to reduce health inequalities, but thought this should apply to children and less so adults who ought to know how to live healthily and have therefore made a choice. |
| Cohesive Communities: Strong, confident and active communities | Supporting the voluntary sector was very important for all the groups. They see the need to offer paid help to ensure the voluntary sector thrives. The young people we saw were clear that there is enough for them to do, they like going to the park, to the shops sometimes and meeting up with their friends. All of which are possible in the area. For the older people they would like more help with their feeling of isolation, be it hands on help available when they need it, more day centres or more available transport. Everyone said that there needs to be more ways of hearing what is available and more dialogue to ensure what is on offer answers the many needs people in the area have. |