



Oxfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy -
A long term vision for the county

Briefing paper I: Community Life

FINAL DRAFT

This paper is number 1 in a series of 12 briefing papers prepared to inform the development of the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy by the Oxfordshire Partnership.

The briefing papers are designed for any individual or organisation interested in finding out more about Oxfordshire. Specifically they have been developed for representatives of organisations in the Oxfordshire Partnership who will be attending workshops and discussions on the priorities for the strategy during 2007.

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I Scope of this paper

This paper covers both:

- a. Oxfordshire's local communities and
- b. Volunteering.

Each of these subjects is a significant area in its own right and, in addition to this theme paper, two sections have been developed for each of the other main Sustainable Community Strategy theme papers (see appendix for the full list) under the headings of "Community needs and aspirations" and "the role of the voluntary sector".

In 2006 Oxfordshire's voluntary and community sector (VCS) published its Local Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and is now jointly planning actions based on research with frontline voluntary and community groups about their activities and support needs.

The development work to implement the recommendations of the IDP is managed by the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Development Partnership (OVSDP) which brings together the main generic voluntary support organisations and representatives of the local statutory authorities.

This paper makes reference to the OVSDP but is not intended to duplicate the plan already underway.

From the evidence cited by the IDP, it is clear that voluntary and community organisations are key partners in the delivery of a range of services across most of the themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy. This paper however will focus in more detail on the impact of community planning and on volunteering as distinct from the VCS as a whole.

The paper is structured into 6 main sections:

Chapter 2: Developing Oxfordshire's Communities - explores what people mean by the term "community"; key points from the Local Government White Paper; the benefits of community planning and an analysis of the community development resources in Oxfordshire.

Chapter 3: Community needs and aspirations - what individuals think is important to community life and the local priorities being raised by parish, town and city area plans.

Chapter 4: Contribution of volunteers to community life – the type of work carried out by volunteers and indications of the scale of volunteering in Oxfordshire

Chapter 5: Addressing the needs of vulnerable people - barriers faced by ethnic minority and hard to reach and marginalised communities; vulnerable volunteers; rural deprivation.

Chapter 6: Threats and opportunities for the future – pressures on communities; opportunities for the future

Chapter 7: Issues and options for the strategy – proposed activities for inclusion in the Sustainable Community Strategy from this theme

2 Developing Oxfordshire's Communities

2.1 What is meant by Community Life?

We have defined "Community Life" as..

the interactions people have with others in their local communities outside of work and home.

Community of place

According to the October 2006 Oxfordshire Citizens' panel, most people personally identify their "community" as the place where they live (see table below).

Table 1 Views on types of community

	Associate the term with.. (% agree)	ONE you most personally identify with
The place where I live	96%	74%
My children's school	72%	2%
A social group I belong to	56%	7%
My workplace	46%	6%
A religious group I belong to	40%	6%
An ethnic group I belong to	19%	
Something else	86%	2%
No answer		3%

Source: Oxfordshire County Council Oct 06 Citizen's Panel, Communication & Marketing team

This finding supports the often-held assumption that the first type of "community" the majority of people identify with is their geographical neighbourhood.

This majority view, however, may hide potentially significant differences. People from religious and ethnic groups, for example, may identify first with their religious or ethnic community.

Community of interest

It is also important to recognise that community life involves, for most people, more than one type of community – not limited to immediate neighbours.

These "communities of interest" can provide essential social networks and support to individuals as well as often delivering tangible benefits back to local communities.

They include, for example, social groups bringing together people who share a specific leisure activity, faith groups, and self-help groups for people with a particular medical

condition or other problem. Many of these communities of interest are supported by formally constituted voluntary organisations such as Mind or Age Concern.

2.2 Strong and prosperous communities – 2006 White Paper

The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* was published in October 2006 with the aim of giving “local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives”.

In January 2007 the Implementation Plan was published setting out how the Government intends to implement the key proposals in the White Paper under 5 workstream headings of:

1. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill
2. Performance
3. Governance and empowerment
4. Cities and regions
5. Community cohesion

The plan redefines the role of Local Area Agreements as the “key mechanism for shaping places” as well as emphasising the involvement of local people in local services and policies, the “strengthened citizen voice”. Local involvement is seen as both bringing in the perspective of service users and building confidence and capacity in communities.

The main issues for partnerships and the public sector from the White Paper and the Implementation Plan are:

- Voluntary, community, faith and BME sector organisations have an important role in representing the needs of local communities in strategic partnerships and in delivering services to vulnerable people in partnership with the public sector and should:
 - be involved in the negotiation and delivery of Local Area Agreements;
 - be actively involved with Local Strategic Partnerships to help shape local areas;
 - work together more closely with each other and with local elected councillors in shaping communities and representing under-represented groups;
 - be prepared to provide evidence about how they meet local needs and how they can modernise and operate more efficiently in the future.
- Partnerships should extend the opportunities for communities to have a greater voice in commissioning services;
- The public sector should consider the sustainability of the key third sector service delivery and infrastructure development organisations in the county.

2.3 Active communities

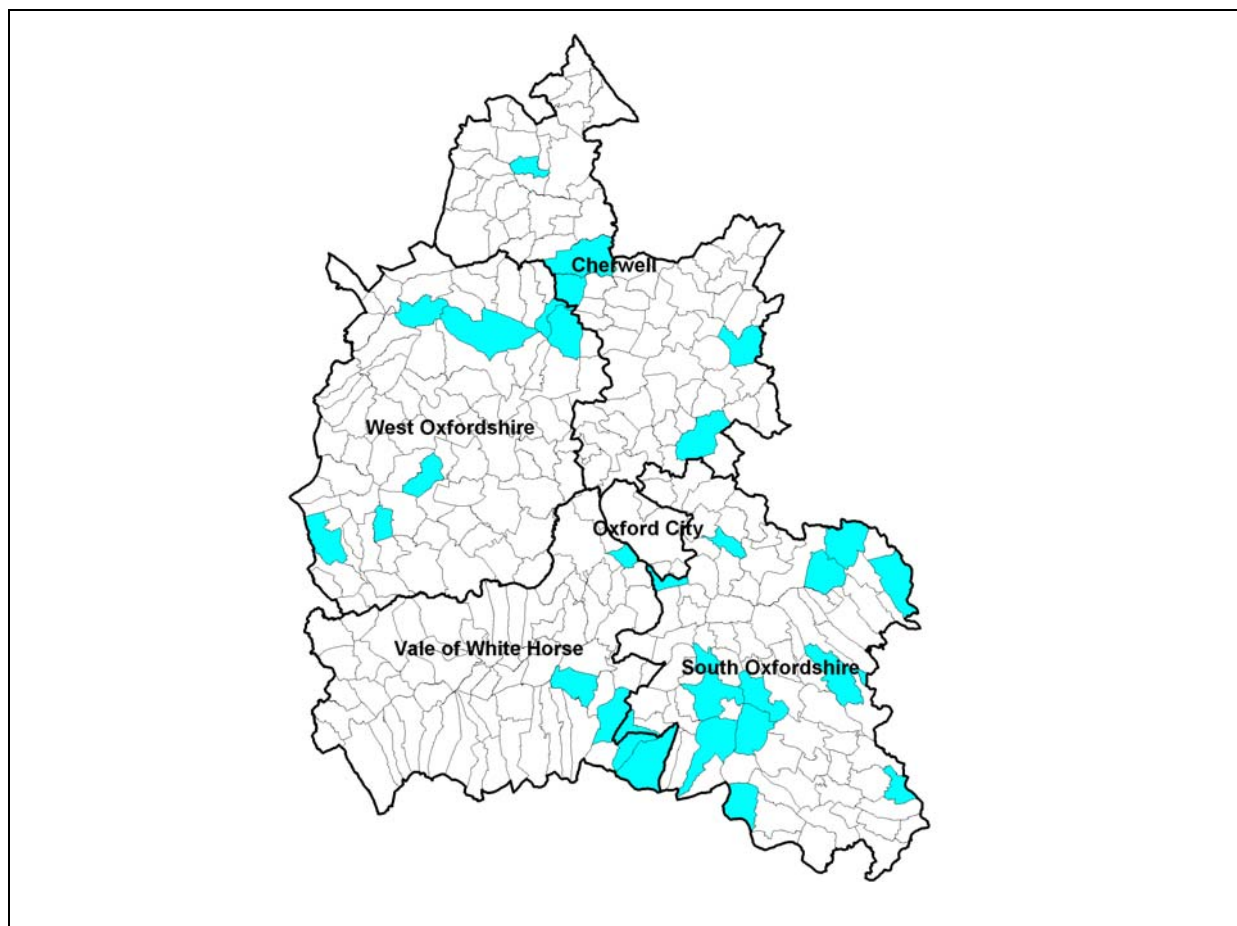
Thriving active communities are much more than the sum of the physical resources in an area. The best examples are those where local people are “making a difference”, improving their community for the benefit of all who live there.

An active community is, by its nature, critically dependent on people willing to make time available, it utilises and develops the intangible community “assets” of the skills, knowledge, interests, experience, ideas and enthusiasm of local people.

A growing number of Oxfordshire's communities are actively planning for their future.

- As of May 2007, 31 parish plans (see map below) and 5 market town healthchecks have been completed.
- At least 30 other communities are currently engaged in community action plan projects and 6 more market town healthchecks are currently underway.

Figure 1 Distribution of completed parish plans in Oxfordshire (shaded areas)



Note: shows areas covered by the 31 completed plans only, as of May 2007

Source: Oxfordshire County Council, data provided by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

In addition to this work by parishes and towns, Oxfordshire's public sector agencies are addressing community needs through joint work via:

- Six area committees in Oxford city (see appendix 8.2).
- The South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) funded area programme focused on projects in the most deprived urban areas in Oxfordshire.
- Localities as defined under the Children and Young People plan.
- Neighbourhood policing areas newly developed by Thames Valley Police and partners.

These initiatives differ from community-led planning in that they are defined by public sector agencies and, in the case of area committees, form part of the City Council's democratic structure with delegated powers and budgets. A joint pilot project between the City and County Councils is looking to strengthen community leadership in the Area Action Planning process, with results to be available for 2008/09.

The benefits of community-led planning are recognised both by communities and by government. Community-led action plans can:

- Create an opportunity for local people to get involved in prompting and prioritising self-help community initiatives and influencing local action by their Parish or Town Council and other community groups.
- Assist external funding applications.
- Provide a local mandate for Parish/Town Council decisions on precept levels and priorities for spending.
- Provide the Parish/Town Council with useful evidence when answering consultations.
- Enable needs, priorities and actions identified by communities to be taken into account in strategic plans and spending decisions by higher-tier authorities and agencies.

In addition we know from discussions with Oxfordshire community groups, that they themselves hope that community-led planning will bring different people and groups together and create a sense of community identity.

A 2002 Home Office review identified four outcomes from community capacity building:

- **Social capital and cohesion** – enabling communities to develop a common vision and sense of belonging where people from different backgrounds feel valued for the part they can play in making their community a better place to live, as well as having the ability to network beyond their own neighbourhoods.
- **Community self-help** – building the capacity of community-led service providers to plan and deliver activities and programmes to meet local needs.
- **Participatory governance** – enabling citizens, individually and collectively, to have a greater say in decisions that affect their communities' well-being.
- **Sustainable involvement** – increasing the confidence and capacity of individuals and groups to participate actively in their communities in ways and through structures that are supported and maintained from within those communities.

Although community-led planning is well underway in Oxfordshire, there are almost 80% of parishes and 60%¹ of towns which are not yet involved and some communities may find it difficult to access support.

We have evaluated the support provided to Oxfordshire's communities for active community development using the *Firm Foundations* (see box) components of:

1. A meeting space
2. Access to seedcorn funding
3. Workers with community development skills
4. A forum or network
5. Learning opportunities (for active citizenship/engagement)

The **Firm Foundations** review carried out by the Home Office in 2004 identified the support needed at neighbourhood, parish or community level to encourage citizens to become more actively involved in the development of their communities.

The key components of this support are:

- **A meeting space or base** (sometimes called a “hub”) which is available welcoming and accessible to all. This could be a physical hub such as a community centre or village hall, school, community flat or shop or a virtual hub such as a website or email network.
- **Access to seedcorn funding**, most often small grants funds or community chests, which have proven very cost-effective in stimulating grass-roots activity and capacity building.
- Access to support provided by **workers with community development skills**, within the framework of values that underpin community development. The critical element is that they have the scope to start from the goals and needs that communities and groups define for themselves, helping them to learn the knowledge and skills needed for active involvement and to support their own groups.
- **A forum or network** that is deliberately inclusive, open and participatory, that is owned by and accountable to the community. This could be a network of community groups, a broad-based community association, a tenant management organisation or a neighbourhood partnership. It will ensure that individuals actions and initiatives are drawn together in mutual support, rather than left to fragment and divide communities.
- Access to high quality and appropriate **learning opportunities** to equip people for active citizenship and engagement. This will range from formal courses through mentoring to informal sharing of ideas and experience. All must be grounded in people's own experiences and be seen to have a direct practical value.

¹ Parishes and towns completed or started planning/healthchecks as % of total number of parishes below 3k population and “towns” above 3k population according to the census 2001 survey.

It is not suggested that a single pattern will suit every community. What is important is that efforts are made in each area to look at what support exists and what is needed, against the yardstick of the key components set out here. This can then form the basis for a plan for development.

The full Home Office *Firm Foundations* report is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502531>

1. Meeting space: Oxfordshire generally has good coverage of community halls or meeting spaces in rural areas. There are a number of very small communities who have managed to retain a facility and parishes with no meeting space are in the minority.

Oxford City Council provides support to 24 community centres as meeting places.

Although many hall management committees have worked hard in recent years to upgrade and extend their halls in response to changing local needs, there is still much improvement work needing to be done. In 1991 a survey showed that 65% of village halls were over 50 years old and 31% were over 100 years old. ORCC is currently aware of hall improvement projects seeking funding totalling a least £5m.

In addition many churches and church halls provide performance and public meeting spaces. In the past seven years something over £15 million has been raised to maintain and develop these buildings and much of this has been used to provide better communal facilities. The major upgrading of churches in Abingdon, Dorchester, Banbury, Henley and Chipping Norton, as well as in Oxford itself, has been mirrored by a multitude of smaller projects in communities as diverse as Burford, Finstock, Chalgrove, Hook Norton, Deddington, Woodstock and many others. With major developments being planned in Berinsfield, Bicester, Witney, and Goring this process looks set to continue for a number of years.

2. Access to seedcorn funding:

Seedcorn funding generally describes small amounts of funding to start up a new initiative, although the amount may actually be quite large depending on the scale of the initiative.

Funding can be obtained from a range of national and regional sources such as the National Lottery, charitable trusts and foundations and the Community Champions fund as well as from Oxfordshire-based schemes.

The Oxfordshire Community Foundation in particular provides a high level of small scale funding to local communities, there are some 60 grant-making trusts either based in or with a particular interest in Oxfordshire, while grants are also available from town and parish councils and the ORCC Parish Plan grants fund.

In Oxfordshire a range of funding is available from all 5 local authorities for community-led activities as diverse as recreation & sports, arts, community facilities, young people, older people or the environment. The total amount available is not known.

It will be important for these small grants to be maintained in the face of increasing pressure to move to a regime of formal procurement and contracting, which will not necessarily suit the needs of small community projects. It is also essential that communities are well-informed about appropriate grant schemes so that they can target their funding applications effectively.

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action provide funding information and advice at its resource centre in central Oxford, with a limited outreach service. Oxfordshire Children and Voluntary Youth Service also has a dedicated funding advice worker for groups dealing with children and young people.

Because Oxfordshire, unlike most other shire counties, lacks a network of district centres for voluntary services (CVS), the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Development Partnership (OVSDP) is piloting outreach points in market towns where this information can be accessed, as well as improved electronic delivery of funding bulletins through www.oxnet.org.uk. These services will be evaluated to ensure that they are reaching isolated rural and urban communities.

3. Workers with community development skills:

The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) identified that there are a number of agencies involved in community development and community capacity-building across the county. These include both Voluntary and Community Organisations and statutory bodies. However, the research undertaken has not so far identified the full range of work going on in communities. There is an identified need for further mapping.

The IDP suggested that a county-wide community development forum could provide a means of networking and liaison. This would link well with the existing MKOB² Community Development Network which welcomes working with county-based forums. However funding has not yet been identified to enable these areas of work to be progressed. What is clear from experience of promoting community-led planning in rural areas of the county is that there is currently insufficient community development worker coverage to prompt and support local initiatives in communities who do not have identified community leaders or champions.

In urban areas, coverage is patchy, with some estates such as Blackbird Leys in Oxford having a history of community development, particularly where they have areas scoring highly on the indices of deprivation and have been able to access regeneration funding. Outside these 'regeneration' areas, the County and City Councils jointly fund a community development worker for Cutteslowe in Oxford.

In growth towns such as Bicester, however, new estates can struggle to develop a sense of community. Innovative faith-led community development work has begun in some of the newest housing estates over the past five years and is now beginning to show quantifiable results.

4. A forum or network:

The OVSDP is collaborating with Oxfordshire's five district councils to run Community and Voluntary forums in all districts, but even this can be too broad a geographic area to address grassroots community needs and aspirations.

In rural communities generally there will not be one local organisation, structure or mechanism for achieving this. The role could be performed by the parish/town council, probably best in conjunction with other representative local organisations, such as the community hall committee, and through promoting local engagement in community-led action planning and other participatory democratic processes. To enable this role to be fully realised, there is a need for support for these local organisations and structures from

² Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire

community development workers and others such as the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and the Oxfordshire Training Partnership.

Ruskin College in Oxford facilitates a variety of initiatives and networking opportunities for community development workers.

In urban areas there have been various programmes of 'community lunches' often facilitated by community development workers. OCVA led the revival of a community lunch for Bicester in 2006 and with the end of the project funding handed over to local people to continue the initiative. While local ownership is eminently desirable, an external trigger is often needed to get such a forum off the ground and this implies start up funding.

5. Learning opportunities:

Informal opportunities can be provided through community development work and community-focussed information and advice services and networking opportunities such as those provided by the ORCC in support of local initiatives and projects in rural communities.

Voluntary organisations are often well-placed to deliver bite-sized learning in support of community development. For example, OCVA has worked with Soha Housing Limited to offer workshops for tenants of social housing in 'meeting skills' and basic fundraising.

The Learning and Skills Council, which is the major funder of adult learning opportunities, has reviewed its approach to 'personal and community development' and seems to be prioritising 'community' learning opportunities over 'personal development' in order to reach out in non-traditional ways to learners who have not engaged in learning since leaving school. A new Learning Network for Oxfordshire is being set up in 2007/08 to bring together voluntary and statutory sector agencies delivering adult learning opportunities, map provision and offer improved progression routes. There is concern, however, that funding for the delivery of learning opportunities at a basic non-accredited level is being eroded by the emphasis on level 2 qualifications and skills for employment.

3 Community needs and aspirations

This chapter provides an overview of issues raised by people and communities in Oxfordshire from three sources:

Section 2.1 is a summary of survey results from the Oxfordshire Citizen's panel.

Section 2.2 is an analysis of 30 community-led plans of parishes and market towns in Oxfordshire prepared by the Countryside & Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire, commissioned as part of building the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base.

Section 2.3 is a summary of priorities from Oxford Area Action plans provided by Oxford City Council.

3.1 Attitudes to communities

According to the Oxfordshire Citizen's panel (October 2006), the factors that were considered by Oxfordshire panel members to be the most important to communities were:

- Low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour (95%)
- Clean and user friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone (94%)
- Access to high quality health care and social services (93%)
- Neighbourliness (92%)
- A sense of pride in your community (92%)

Views on how far each indicator positively relates to their local communities varied widely.

- Just over six in ten panel members (63%) agree that there are low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour in their local community, whereas one in eight (17%) disagree. Panel members who live in Oxford City are significantly the most likely to disagree (28%).
- Again, sixty-three percent of panel members agree that there are clean and user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone in their local community, whereas sixteen percent disagree. Panel members who live in Cherwell are significantly less likely to agree (54%).
- Overall, sixty-four percent of panel members agree that there is access to high quality health care and social services in their local community, whereas fourteen percent disagree. There are no noteworthy variances in opinion between different sub-groups of the panel.
- In total, around three-quarters of the Citizens' Panel (74%) agree that they live in a community where there is neighbourliness; and this felt particularly by those who live the Vale of White Horse (82%) and/or a hamlet (90%). One in ten panel members disagree that the area where they live is somewhere where people have contact with their neighbours.
 - Respondents in rural areas were slightly more likely than those in urban areas to speak to their neighbours daily (27% vs 24% of urban respondents).

- Sixty-three percent of panel members say the community they live in has a sense of pride, whereas 13% disagree. Panel members from West Oxfordshire are significantly more likely than others to feel a sense of pride in their community (78%), compared with 52% of those living in Oxford City.

Rural panel respondents appear to have been more involved with community groups, local meetings/clubs and fundraising than urban respondents (as shown in the following table).

Table 2 In the last 12 months have you been involved in any capacity with any of the following..

	% Urban	% Rural	% Overall
a) A local community group	29	34	31
B) Local meetings	31	35	32
c) A local sports club	24	26	25
d) A religious/faith group	21	23	22
e) A parent/toddler group	9	12	10
f) A 'PTA' or school governors group	9	12	10
g) A charitable fundraising group	24	28	26
h) An environmental/conservation group	9	11	10
i) A pub team	10	10	10
j) A music group	8	10	9
k) An action/lobbying/special interest group	16	16	16
l) A Neighbourhood Watch Group	12	14	13
m) Other	3	3	3
No answer	23	22	23

Source: Citizen's panel October 2006, Communication & Marketing team Oxfordshire County Council

Just over half of all respondents (52%) say they have used their local community centre/village hall in the last 12 months.

- Those panel members living in South Oxfordshire (63%) and West Oxfordshire (61%) were significantly more likely to use this community facility, as are women (56% compared to 48% of men)
- 56% of those in rural areas used their community centre compared with 50% in urban areas.

Overall, a third of respondents (36%) say they are aware of a community plan having been produced for their local area in the last 5 years; and three per cent say they actively got involved in this process.

- Those respondents living in South Oxfordshire (47%) and the Vale of White Horse (45%) were significantly the most likely to say their local area has a community plan.

3.2 Community-led plans

Introduction

This section contains extracts from a report prepared by the Countryside & Community Research Unit at the University of Gloucestershire from a review of 30 Oxfordshire parish and market towns plans published between 2002 and 2007 (see appendix).

Since the total number of plans available for this review was relatively small, any comparisons of the differences between districts or between types of settlements can only be indicative. However they still provide a useful snapshot of issues and perceived priorities of communities in Oxfordshire.

Note that recommendations and more detail on the background to community-led plans are available in the full report "Community-led plans in Oxfordshire: their potential contribution to strategic planning, May 2007" published as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base.

Issues raised by Oxfordshire's community-led plans by theme

- Community Safety: Twenty of the thirty plans (14 rural settlements and 6 market towns) raised community safety (excluding road traffic danger, which is dealt with under 'Access to Services and Travel' below) as an issue requiring action. The most common concerns were anti-social behaviour and vandalism, although dangerous and untidy car parking was also mentioned.
- Economy: As might be expected, the economy was mostly an issue for market towns, being raised by eight out of ten market town plans and only seven out of twenty villages. A large number of actions were suggested, most of which concerned support for local businesses and local employment.
- Children & Young People: All but four of the plans were concerned about children and/or young people, with rather more emphasis on the older age group.
- Learning & Skills: Adult education did not seem to be a major concern in most places covered by community-based plans. There were only nine mentions of adult education or workforce skills. Six of them concerned the introduction or improvement of evening or day-time classes for adults.
- Environment: All but one of the thirty plans made reference to an issue concerning the environment. A large number of issues were raised ranging from the built environment, wildlife and sustainability and more recently climate change.
- Health, care and well-being: Just under half (13) of the plans were concerned with health, care and wellbeing. A wide variety of actions were suggested, some concerning general health services and facilities and some being specifically concerned with the elderly and infirm.
- Housing: Nineteen out of the thirty plans mentioned housing as an issue, all but one of these making some reference to affordable housing.
- Access & travel: All but one of the settlements had an issue relating to access to services and travel. These ranged from the provision of local shops, other services and utilities to concerns around speeding, parking, public transport and foot and cycle paths.

- Recreation, leisure and culture: Twenty-five of the thirty plans included action points or issues relating to recreation, leisure and culture, covering both extension of existing provision (including increased volunteering) and consideration of facilities needed.
- Spatial Oxfordshire: Fifteen of the plans contained issues or actions under this theme.

Summary

The research found all but one of Oxfordshire's community-led plans to be concerned with the 'environment' and with 'access to services and travel' and more than half to be concerned with 'children and young people' (especially activities for young people and children's playgrounds), 'recreation, leisure and culture', 'community safety' and 'housing' (especially affordable housing), whilst exactly half raised points under 'economy' and 'spatial Oxfordshire'.

This can be compared with the priorities from a similar analysis carried out in 2005³ of 'affordable housing', 'facilities for young adults', 'improved public transport' and 'police presence/crime related', the most notable difference being the lack of environmental issues from the 2005 study.

In spite of differences between the two pieces of research, both show that there is a wide range of issues raised by parish and town plans and, perhaps more significantly, for which actions at a local level are proposed. While many issues are raised in a large number of plans, each community has a different range of priorities and proposed actions. Thus, plans can be used both to raise general issues such as affordable housing, and to gauge the views and priorities of a particular community, for example as to the relative importance of affordable housing and protecting greenfield sites.

Differences between market towns and rural settlements were apparent on some issues, indicating, not surprisingly, that the size and facilities of a settlement will have an effect on the priorities of its inhabitants.

Many plans did not assign actions to particular actors or groups of actors. However, where this was done there was usually a lead actor, which was either the parish or town council or a parish or town plan working group. However, this body often did not have the power actually to make the desired change, in which case the action usually involved putting pressure on another body such as the district or county council.

It appears from the research, though, that parish and town plans have a valuable role to play in pinpointing local priorities and either stimulating local action or informing other bodies such as principal authorities of local priorities and needs. They certainly appear to offer a great opportunity to start a real dialogue between the community and service providers to build a better mutual understanding of what is needed and what the possibilities are for finding solutions. In more complex cases, new solutions may be found through partnerships between local actors and those working on a larger scale.

³ Derounian, J. (2005) An Analysis of Oxfordshire Parish Plans, research report to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, April.

What can Parish (and similar) Plans provide for Strategic Planners?

Parish plans - and similar community-led plans - offer two particular benefits to strategic planners.

- (i) If enough have recently been produced, they can collectively provide a **community-based snapshot** of issues and perceived priorities across the county as a whole, or at least across its rural component. (This point is likely to be equally valid regarding the small town or intra-city context.) Those working at a strategic, e.g. LSP, level may get a better perspective on the relative weight of concerns to which they should direct their attention.
- (ii) They will certainly identify **particular concerns and priorities** at the individual parish level which require specific, bespoke, reactions. (Specific examples in the Oxfordshire context include: Launton wishing to remain separate from Bicester; Brightwell-cum-Sotwell's concern for its closed village shop, and Chinnor wanting improved sports facilities to be included in the redevelopment of a former cement works). The task of strategic planners in this respect is to consider whether and how far existing and future programmes and delivery mechanisms might be modified in order to respond adequately to such concerns.

A third and very significant way in which community-led planning may benefit strategic planning must also be cited –

- (iii) It relates to **developing human and social capital** (taking 'human capital' to indicate individual people viewed as a resource, and 'social capital' to mean structures, groups, shared values etc, again viewed as a resource). If, increasingly, it is to be local communities that are to deliver more of what they need, then such capacity building is important – and it appears that human and social capital are often best generated as a by-product of people doing things together rather than as the product of specific initiatives such as training.

Going on from that, earlier work on parish plans by the Countryside & Community Research Unit, which again can be applied to other types of community-led planning, suggests that the action points that such plans commonly set out are of three types, each type requiring a different strategic response:

- a. **projects that local communities can very largely undertake themselves**, even if they require a measure of fundraising. Examples in the Oxfordshire case include: Dorchester establishing its own community web-site; Henley on Thames town council providing more public waste bins, and the Dorn valley parishes recruiting a group of people to walk local footpaths and monitor their condition. Here the 'strategic need' is likely to be modest and not go beyond ensuring that some facilitation assistance and possibly pump-priming money, is available. And here, of course, the local voluntary and community sector, and those who support it, is vital.
- b. **projects that require one or more external agencies or service providers to undertake them**, possibly in partnership with the local community. For example: Faringdon seeking town and district collaboration in increasing its stock of affordable housing, and Carterton wanting town and district councils, as well as the Tourist Board and local Chamber of Commerce, to collectively market the town's business opportunities. In such cases a key need is for strategic planners to consider how far the proposed project accords with existing priorities and, in consequence, to consider any allocation of resources;

- c. **issues that do not require explicit resource allocation by strategic planners**, but a possible variation in general policy. For example a widely expressed general fear of crime, or concern for climate change might each suggest a need to look across the range of potentially relevant strategic policies with a view to strengthening, or revising, them in certain respects.

Recommendations from analysis of Oxfordshire's community-led plans

Given the various benefits that can and do commonly spin off from community-led plans, it is recommended that at the strategic level:

- (i) Unequivocal encouragement and support is given to the launch and undertaking of such planning, focussing specifically on parish and town councils (primarily to give the exercises the legitimacy that would be lacking if just ad hoc groups of residents were responsible, as was often the case with 'village appraisals') and on any disadvantaged parishes where 'little or nothing seems to happen'.
- (ii) Putting in place clear procedures and machinery so that community-led plans can be properly received and acted upon.
- (iii) Addressing a number of 'human resources' issues, in particular:
- ensuring adequate staffing at the strategic level – 'adequate' to ensure that the above proposals are undertaken in a timely and efficient way;
 - capacity building at the local level, especially in those places poorly endowed with community leaders;
 - clarifying the role of elected (district and county) councillors in this process who, at worst, may feel bypassed, or more positively, may become better placed to champion the needs and priorities of their constituents. The current enquiry into strengthening the role of rural councillors by the Commission of Rural Communities is relevant here.
- (iv) On the assumption that at least a dozen or so community-led plans are produced in the county each year, produce an annual 'State of the County's Communities' report, distilling the main substantive messages of the latest crop of plans (and perhaps also reporting on the tangible results flowing for the previous crop of such plans).

CCRU, University of Gloucestershire, May 2007

3.3 Summary of priorities of Oxford Area Action plans

Each of the six Area Committees in Oxford has developed an Action Plan which sets out the key improvements needed in the area that local people, local groups, the Area Committee and other organisations through working together can bring about. The plans seek to embody local issues and activities and be a catalyst for greater local partnership working.

The following box shows the priorities from the Area Committee Action plans relating to the Community Life theme.

Community Life priorities from Oxford Area Action plans⁴ (by area)

Central, South & West

- Community building development
- Developing a more effective dialogue with local people (between councils and key service providers and local people)
- St Ebbes - helping to support community cohesion, tackling anti-social behaviour, improving the environment, improving facilities for young people
- A vibrant street life and managing the conflicts between users
- Improve the public realm – public spaces, the welcome to the city, pedestrian Improvements etc

Cowley

- Support the development of community networks to assist local people to work effectively together
- Promotion of cultural activities within the area, whether provided by community organisations or professional arts organisations
- Improving communication between local people and both the City and County Councils, police and PCT to help prioritise local services
- Many different population groups locally - students, minority ethnic groups and need to develop more ways of bringing people together within the community

East

- Developing a more effective dialogue with local people (between councils and key service providers and local people)
- Develop provision of a community newsletter for the area
- Implement community development programmes in the area to improve inter community dialogue and recognizing the need to engage with and celebrate the diverse cultures in the area

North

- Support for young people and children
- Supporting and extending community facilities
- Encouraging street and residents' associations, especially in securing solutions to their issues
- *Update since last Area Plan, support for older people, especially those isolated through frailty or low income – key issue around access to transport, shops and companionship*

⁴ See appendix section 6.2 for background to Area Action Plans

North East

- Support for community organisations providing community meeting space and services to their communities
- Support the development of community networks to assist local people to work effectively together
- Improving communication between local people and both the City and County Councils, police and Primary Care Trust to help prioritise local services
- Improving community facilities
- Development of community facility in New Marston working in partnership with scouts

South East

- Review use of community buildings to ensure effective community use
- Developing a more effective dialogue with local people (between councils and key service providers and local people)
- Seek to provide better assured funding for voluntary groups in the area, including advice centres and the Credit Union, as part of a review of grants in the area
- Seek to further develop residents and tenants groups in the area to improve community participation in local service planning

Priorities from Oxford Area Action plans, Oxford City Council July 2007

4 Contribution of volunteers to community life

Volunteering can be formal or informal and is often not recognised as 'volunteering' when it is a neighbour or family member helping out. It is also not always understood that all trustees, board members and management committee members of voluntary groups are unpaid volunteers, even if that group also employs paid staff.

A major survey of voluntary and community organisations in the county was carried out for the Oxfordshire Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Development (OVID) consortium in 2005/06. The results indicated that around 80,000 people in Oxfordshire are active volunteers and that the value of their work could be as much as £40 million.

- An alternative estimate, produced by scaling the RAISE⁵ figure of £932m voluntary labour in the South East, values Oxfordshire's voluntary labour at £70 million.

Follow-up work in June 2007 commissioned by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action⁶ tested the OVID estimate of volunteers using a wider range of data sources and concluded that the more likely number of volunteers in Oxfordshire is around 150,000 giving over 12 million hours per annum (over £65m).

Extract from Oxfordshire's Local Infrastructure Development plan March 2006

The exact number of Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) in Oxfordshire is not known, and estimates of the number of groups and organisations vary. Estimates produced as part of the background work for this Plan suggest that there are at least 3,000 voluntary and community groups in the county, and probably nearer 4,000. Two thirds of them are small groups operating at a local level, entirely dependent on volunteers to carry out their work, and with very little recourse to public funding – or indeed funding of any kind.

A survey of VCOs undertaken for the project found 10,000 voluntary management committee members and volunteers supporting the groups that responded. That is an average of 27 volunteers in each group. Bearing in mind that these results reflect the information provided by around one fifth of the county's voluntary and community organisations, the findings suggest that there may be as many as 80,000 volunteers across the County if the results were scaled up pro rata.

The survey also found that committee members give on average 9.9 hours per week to their group or organisation. Other volunteers give 6.4 hours per week. Between them, volunteers working with the VCOs that responded to the survey give more than 1.5 million hours of their time each year; and the value of this voluntary effort is £7.9 million per annum if costed at the national minimum wage. Scaled up to reflect the size of the sector as a whole, the value of voluntary effort across the county could be as much as £40 million.

Types of organisation: The different types of group that responded to the survey may reflect three different stages in the evolution of VCOs in the county:

- (1) small informal groups without a constitution and that operate without external funding accounted for 16% of respondents (particularly highlighted in the ASP

⁵ Regional Action and Involvement South East - voluntary and community organisations in the South East

⁶ Volunteering for Oxfordshire, Gray-King & Gray Ltd, June 2007

work);

- (2) more formally constituted groups that have a written constitution accounted for 29% of respondents;
- (3) registered charities accounted for 43% of respondents.

Period of time in existence: A large majority of the VCOs that responded to the survey (84%) were established at least ten years ago. Only 2% of organisations said that they were formed in the two years prior to the survey.

Activities: The groups and organisations that responded to the survey were involved in a very wide range of activities. The most common were the provision of advice and information, education and training, sport and recreation, provision of emotional support (befriending, counselling, bereavement support, pastoral care, and rehabilitation), play and youth work, social care and welfare, activities relating to arts media and culture, and running a village hall or community centre.

Beneficiaries: The benefits of the sector's work were widely spread through the community – older people, children and young people were the participants or beneficiaries most commonly mentioned. A substantial number of VCOs said that they have an 'open door' policy providing their services to all members of the community.

How many people or organisations are served: Each organisation was asked how many people or organisations used its services or took part in its activities. VCOs providing services or activities for individual members of the public divided into two groups – those involved with between 25 and 150 people each year; and those involved with between 300 and 500 each year. This appeared to reflect the division between groups operating at a local level, and groups operating at district or county level. A rough calculation from these results shows that the organisations that responded are running activities or providing services for around 300,000 people each year.

These estimates are supported by recent research into the VCS across the south east (Hidden Asset, RAISE) which found that the VCS employs about 6% of the region's workforce, contributes 3.4% of GDP, and supplies volunteering labour worth £932 million. 726,000 people across the region are believed to volunteer (one in 11 of all residents).

There are currently over 1,000 organisations registered with the Oxfordshire Network of Voluntary and Community organisations (Oxnet) and the following table shows the type and number of groups which map directly to the themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Table 3 Oxfordshire's voluntary organisations mapped to the themes of the SCS

Theme	Number of groups registered on Oxnet
2 Community Safety	11 groups for victims of domestic violence 15 groups focused on drug and alcohol users 3 for offenders and ex-offenders
3 Economy	OVID results scaled up means at least 6,000 people employed in the VCS sector (paid employees) plus 41,000 unpaid (excluding committee members) 10 orgs surveyed had turnover of more than £500k pa
4 C&YP	112 groups for children aged 1-15 106 groups for young people 16-25
5 Learning & skills	132 involved in Education and training 27 with a focus on economic development 15 for unemployed people
6 Environment	36 groups 60 members of the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum
7 Health, care & well being	115 for older people 250 focused on health and disability
8 Housing	38 groups for homeless people 64 groups for housing and hostels
10 Access & travel	38 transport groups
11 Recreation, leisure and culture	60 arts media and culture groups 90 sport and recreation groups

Volunteers are crucial not only to the activities of voluntary organisations but also to statutory bodies such as schools (school governors) and hospitals (hospital shops, transport and other services).

- Oxfordshire has 249 town and parish councils and an estimated 1,600 town and parish councillors.
- At the end of March 2007 there were 3,895 school governors in Oxfordshire all acting as volunteers.
- There are 2,976 registered charities in Oxfordshire with around 8 trustees each, making a total of over 25,000 voluntary board members.

Less visible work by volunteers is carried out in many areas including, for example, volunteering in sport and in schools (see table below).

Table 4 Volunteering in Oxfordshire - examples

Theme	Area of work & scale
1 Community Life	270 village hall management committees with an average of 8 members per committee = 2,160 volunteers (most of them charity trustees) Managing total capital assets of over £60m (1995 figures adjusted) Total volunteer time contributed p.a.:£1m+ (1995 figures) Urban community centres TBA
1 Community Life	Involvement in community planning – 10 plans being developed p.a. involving minimum of 10 volunteers
1 Community Life	Faith communities supporting social groups; 264 CofE churches, plus other faiths with 2 or 3 support/counselling activities per church = approx 1,000 groups in Oxfordshire. Parochial or Pastoral Church Councils (C of E and Catholic) 5,500+ members
2 Community Safety	55 Youth offending team volunteers 65 special constables and 128 police support volunteers 25 Victim Support volunteers
3 Economy	15 community shops involving a total of at least 300 volunteers Oxford Credit Union 20 volunteers.
4 C&YP	Help in schools - reading, PTAs etc; Volunteer Reading Help 130 volunteers; estimated 2,200 PTA members
4 C&YP	Cycle training – 680 volunteers giving 7.5 hours for each group of children they train
4 C&YP	Footsteps child pedestrian training – 360 volunteers taking children out 3-4 times per term for 10-15 minutes
4 C&YP	966 Guide and Brownie leaders
6 Environment	Waste (Community) Action Groups – 19 groups each with between 3 and 30 volunteers giving between 8 and 40 hours a month
6 Environment	Countryside services – tree wardens, footpaths Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust 450 volunteers
7 Health, care & well being	118 Home Start volunteers in Oxford; Oxfordshire Befriending Network 102 volunteers; Helen & Douglas House 185 volunteers

10	Access & travel	900 volunteer drivers making 31,500 trips p.a. (ORCC estimate)
11	Recreation, leisure and culture	% adult population volunteering in sport for at least 1 hour per week: Cherwell=6.3%; Oxford=4.7%; South Oxon=7.1%; Vale of WH=6.1%; West Oxon=4.9% ⁷ approx 26,000 volunteers
11	Recreation, leisure and culture	At least 200 parishes have recreational spaces managed by volunteers (parish councillors and others) – likely to number 1,000 to 1,500
11	Recreation, leisure and culture	Oxford Playhouse 130 volunteers; Witney & District Museum 51 volunteers

It is envisaged that this contribution and the voluntary sector's involvement in supporting community life will grow.

This will only happen, however, if volunteering is adequately encouraged, recognised and supported and the main way in which formal volunteering is supported is through volunteer centres.

In Oxfordshire there are a number of local centres that match potential volunteers with individuals seeking help, often with transport needs. They include for example Didcot volunteer centre and Abingdon volunteer centre.

Organisations like these, however, do not usually operate a brokerage service on behalf of other organisations. In Oxfordshire, this type of brokerage is carried out by Volunteer Link Up West Oxfordshire for Witney and the surrounding area, by Banbury CVS and Volunteer Bureau for the Banbury area, and by the OCVA volunteer centre for the rest of the county.

Between them they advertise some 500 voluntary opportunities and have contact with between 1,000 and 1,500 potential volunteers annually. They also provide good practice advice to volunteer-involving organisations about, for example, the payment of expenses, health and safety, or Criminal Records Bureau checks.

A recent paper presented to the Treasury from Volunteering England (the national umbrella body) calculates a funding formula per county to ensure these vital services are able to exist and meet quality standards. The formula suggests that Oxfordshire needs over £200,000 a year to reach the agreed standard. In some other shire counties there is concern that the formula would give less funding than is currently allocated, yet in Oxfordshire the volunteer centres are being kept afloat in the very short term by national funding at less than 40% of the formula (see threats in section 6.1).

⁷ Active people survey carried out by MORI on behalf of Sport England 2005/2006
http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/research/active_people.htm

5 Addressing the needs of vulnerable people

5.1 Needs of groups/organisations in ethnic minority communities

As part of the research for the Oxfordshire IDP, an Additional Support Programme (ASP) paid particular attention to the needs of groups and organisations in ethnic minority communities, and in particular in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Faith – and in particular minority Faith, Refugee, Asylum Seeker, Gypsy and Traveller communities.

The conclusion from this limited survey information is that the majority of groups led by people from the ASP communities are small, have few financial resources and other assets, and are heavily dependent on volunteers. In many respects, this makes them similar to many of the organisations found within the mainstream voluntary and community sector – with one significant difference. Groups within the ASP communities face significant barriers that may be different to those faced by mainstream groups.

Barriers faced by ASP communities include, for example:

- Access to funding: It is difficult to get funding to help people who have gone through the asylum process even though there are often reasons why people cannot be returned home for some time (for example, illness, pregnancy, or lack of a safe route home). Therefore there is very limited support for work with failed asylum seekers.
- Access to premises and facilities: Access to premises was one of the most important needs identified in the interviews. Premises are needed for cultural events, sporting activities and as places of worship. Groups would like to secure permanent premises so that they and their activities become easily accessible as well as easily recognised by their users, and not be termed “hard to reach” by service providers.
- Language barriers: Language barriers may stop organisations from applying for funding. Some groups lack the levels of language skills required to enable them to write a winning project proposal. Within some communities, there are also issues associated with literacy in the mother tongue.
- Rural needs: Organisations in the rural areas have problems which are peculiar to the rural areas. These problems affect both service provision and access to services. Rural issues that affect both the ASP communities and majority communities alike include transport, access to ICT, access to health and social care services and a lack of support for carers, culturally inappropriate support and a shortage of volunteers.
- Advocacy and publicity: Interviews with organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, and with the Traveller communities, showed that these organisations need skills to deal with the media especially in cases where they are expected to respond to negative publicity.

The interviews also found that there is inadequate awareness of race equality and cultural diversity within mainstream voluntary and statutory organisations.

Travellers in Oxfordshire currently have no voluntary organisations working specifically for or with them in any capacity, and are largely excluded from the services of other organisations catering to more general needs within the community as a whole. Oxfordshire County Council has a duty of care to all Gypsies and Travellers in the county and education needs are additionally supported by the Advisory Service for the Education of Travellers (ASET).

Lessons learned from ASP as a whole

Even though the target groups – BME, Faith, Asylum Seeker, Refugee, Gypsy and Traveller communities - were put in the same category [...], the reality is that these are diverse groups who, in most cases, have very little in common with each other. What they do have in common is that they are detached from each other just as they are detached from the mainstream. Application of this false sense of homogeneity creates problems because the needs of these communities are very different with reference to language, culture, religion, immigration status and entitlement to services.

BME organisations were concerned that there seemed to be a relationship of mistrust between statutory agencies and BME groups and that this affected their access to funding and partnership opportunities. BME groups felt that they were seen as “hard to reach” by mainstream providers. Their experience was that the mainstream itself was conservative in its approach and failed to ‘reach out’ to them.

5.2 Vulnerable volunteers

The benefits of volunteering for vulnerable people, who may for example be formerly homeless, users of mental health services, or ex-offenders, are well documented. However, in order to volunteer these individuals need tailored support to help them secure a suitable placement. OCVA has recently had some success in enabling volunteers to gain a portfolio-based qualification for their volunteering, thus enabling them to make progress towards paid employment.

5.3 Rural deprivation

There are small isolated pockets of deprivation scattered across generally prosperous rural areas making needy individuals and groups more difficult to identify and support.

Centralisation of services and increasing transport pressures may lead to vulnerable people becoming more isolated. The growth in the number of older people, especially those aged 85 and over, may increase the number of isolated people in rural areas.

Young people, people from minority ethnic groups and other individuals and groups at risk of social exclusion also have needs that can be overlooked.

6 Threats and opportunities for the future

6.1 Threats

1. Deprived communities

- Areas of urban Oxfordshire (particularly parts of Oxford and Banbury) rank poorly on the national "index of deprivation". This includes poor health, educational attainment and poverty.

2. Access to services

- Rural Oxfordshire ranks very poorly on national measures of access to services such as health, retail and leisure activities. This is likely to worsen if the trend towards centralisation of services continues.
- People are travelling longer distances to work & busy lifestyles potentially erode support for smaller local services in both rural and urban areas.
- There is an increasing reliance on voluntary effort to fill gaps left by public and private service providers, especially in rural areas.

3. Affordable housing

- Younger people and those on low incomes are finding it increasingly difficult to access housing near their home communities.

4. Support for volunteering

- There is said to be a 'crisis' in volunteering. It is certainly true that people have less and less free time if they are working and commuting for long hours. Existing volunteers, anecdotal evidence suggests, are ageing and younger people are not coming forward in sufficient numbers.
- In a county with very high rates of employment, many potential volunteers are vulnerable individuals who need high levels of support in order to enter and sustain a volunteer placement. There is currently very little funding available for that support and it is very short-term – see below.
- Currently Oxfordshire's formal volunteer brokerage services only survive on a grant from central government that expires in March 2008. If no sustainable funding is identified after that, the services will have to close or operate at a much reduced level, with consequent impact both on numbers of volunteers recruited and the quality of the volunteering experience.

5. Polarisation of communities

- Young and old (made more severe by the ageing population). There is already a lack of targeted provision for young people in rural areas.
 - The risk that focusing on the needs of the growing elderly population may further marginalise young people.

- Tension between settled and new populations as a result of national or international migration.
 - the need for community development support and improved social/community service infrastructure for newly-arrived populations in large new developments and their receiving towns.
- 6 Supporting parish/community and area committee (Oxford) planning processes
- lack of secure funding of existing support and process grant provision after March 2008
 - gaps in availability of methodology and support for this activity in larger urban areas
7. Climate change
- Climate change is likely to have environmental and social consequences for rural and urban communities.

6.2 Opportunities

1. Current local government policy emphasis on localism, place shaping and community engagement and involvement
2. Different methods of providing access to local services
 - Outreach and mobile services.
 - Expanded role of schools.
 - Creative and co-ordinated use of transport resources available within the public, voluntary and private sectors through partnership working.
3. Supporting parish and community planning processes and area committee (Oxford) planning processes
 - Ensure sustainability of current community development and grant aid support for engagement in community action planning projects.
 - Extend support to larger urban areas.
 - Introduce new source(s) of small grants to support community projects stemming from action plans.
4. A wider role for the Voluntary and Community Sector
 - It is recognised that voluntary organisations are often better at reaching excluded people than statutory agencies. There is therefore a drive to procure more services from them in order to make a real difference to those who most need support.
 - As the focus shifts to preventative services, the voluntary sector will have an increasingly important role to play.

5. Consultation as part of service development

- For example: growing recognition by authorities and agencies from parish to county level of the need to involve and consult children and young people in order to inform strategy and service development.

6. Climate change

- Awareness-raising to encourage joint work by communities on environmental issues – e.g. “carbon neutral” villages.

7 Issues and options for the strategy

Issues

- Lack of agreed partnership processes and dedicated resources for supporting community-led planning in urban and rural communities of all sizes.
- Lack of volunteer brokerage services in Oxfordshire (only survived through national funding).
- Lack of progress on work on equality and diversity by the VCS, statutory and private sectors.

Options

- Review and extend support to community-led planning to include all types of community across the county.
- Review options and targets for volunteer brokerage.
- Strengthen support for BME groups (OVSDP ref 5.12)
- Work with mainstream agencies to ensure they become more accessible and inclusive of BME and other groups at risk of exclusion.

APPENDIX I – Background to work analysing community plans

Parish and market town plans

In May 2007, the Countryside & Community Research Unit at the University of Gloucestershire reviewed and summarised the 30 Oxfordshire parish and market towns plans completed in the past five years (see table below).

Table 5 Parish and town plans analysed

Benson Parish Plan	Goring Village Plan
Blewbury Parish Plan	An Action Plan for Harwell
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Plan	Henley on Thames Action Plan for Year Three
An Action Plan for Carterton	The Launton Village Plan
Chinnor Parish Plan	Minster Lovell Village Action Plan
Chipping Norton Town Appraisal	Sandford on Thames Parish Plan
The Cholsey Plan	South Hinksey Parish Plan
Crowmarsh Parish Appraisal	Steventon Parish Plan
Dorchester Parish Plan	Tetsworth Village Plan
Dorn Valley Parishes Plan	Thame in Trust: a vision and action plan
Duns Tew Village Plan	Upton Parish Plan
Enstone Action Plan	A Town Plan for Wallingford
Faringdon Action Plan	Suggestions for a Better Watlington
Fencott and Murcott Parish Plan Vision	West Hagbourne Parish Plan
Filkins and Broughton Poggs Parish Plan	Wheatley Parish Plan

Since the total number of plans available for this review was relatively small, any comparisons of the differences between districts or between types of settlements can only be indicative. However they still provide a useful snapshot of issues and perceived priorities of communities in Oxfordshire.

Note that comparisons by district are difficult as a result of the imbalance of plans between the four rural districts, particularly in the case of market towns (see following table).

Table 6 plans considered by district and type of settlement

District	Number of market towns	Number of rural settlements	Total number of plans
Cherwell	0	3	3
South Oxfordshire	7	8	15
Vale of White Horse	1	5	6
West Oxfordshire	2	4	6
Total	10	20	30

Recommendations and more detail on the background to community-led plans are available in the main report "Community-led plans in Oxfordshire: their potential contribution to strategic planning, May 2007" published as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base (supplementary paper 1).

Oxford Area Action plans

There are six Area Committees in Oxford:

- Central, South and West
- Cowley
- East
- North
- North East
- South East (formerly Iffley Leys)

Each Area Committee is made up of the ward councillors for its Area and, on a non-voting basis, the County Councillors for the Area and the parish councils. Partnerships are being developed with the Police, who are usually present at the Area Committees, and the Oxford City Primary Care Trust.

The Area Committees form part of the City Council's democratic structure and are responsible for the following services in their areas:

- parks, play areas and countryside
- off street car parking
- public toilets
- street cleaning and monitoring of street scene performance
- dog wardens
- abandoned vehicles
- community centres
- planning applications

Each Area has developed an Action Plan the purpose of which is to set out the key improvements needed in the area that local people, local groups, the Area Committee and

other organisations through working together can bring about. They seek to embody local issues and activities and be a catalyst for greater local partnership working.

The development of Action Plans in Oxford City has involved substantial consultation with local communities and they are not defined by public sector agencies. In 2004, a survey of all local groups e.g. residents groups was carried out followed by workshops in each of the 6 areas with representatives from residents and tenant groups and community organisations. Overall 76 groups were represented at the workshops. This provided the basis for development of the area plans.

In 2005/06 the area committees facilitated further workshops in each area across the city to discuss priorities in greater detail and possible solutions. These workshops were then followed up with 633 on street interviews (approx 100 in each area). The analysis of the findings has been the basis of refreshing the area plans and the key issues identified for each of the areas and fed into the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base.

More detail on the priorities from Area Action Plans are available in a supplementary report (2) published as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base.

APPENDIX 2 – Finding out more

Documents

Capacity Building and Infrastructure Development for the Voluntary and Community Sector in Oxfordshire (March 2006)

Report for the Oxfordshire Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Development (OVID) and Additional Support Programme (ASP) Consortia

Oxfordshire Local Infrastructure Development Plan: Progress Report (February 2007)

Compiled by North Harbour Consulting Limited

Working paper profiles of (5 Oxfordshire) District Council VCS survey (January 2005)

North Harbour Consulting Limited

Volunteering for Oxfordshire

Report by Gray-King & Gray Ltd commissioned by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, June 2007

Hidden Asset (2005)

www.raise-networks.org.uk

The report evaluates the contribution of the voluntary/community sector in the south east.

Firm Foundations (2004)

Home Office

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502531>

Strong and prosperous communities - The Local Government White Paper (Oct 2006)

Communities and Local Government

The aim of this White Paper is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. It is about creating strong, prosperous communities and delivering better public services through a rebalancing of the relationship between central government, local government and local people.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999>

Oxfordshire Guide to Funding Opportunities

http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/council_services/community_living/grants/oxfordshire_grants_guide.pdf

Also available through district and county council websites and www.oxnet.org.uk.

Organisations

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action	www.ocva.org.uk
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council	www.oxonrcc.org.uk
Banbury Council for Voluntary Services	via www.oxnet.org.uk
West Oxfordshire Volunteer Link-up	via www.oxnet.org.uk
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils	via www.oxonrcc.org.uk
Oxfordshire Data Observatory	www.oxfordshireobservatory.info

APPENDIX 3 – list of briefing papers

	Theme	Broad content
	Oxfordshire Futures	Overview of economic, environmental and social trends and issues affecting the long term future of Oxfordshire
THEME PAPERS		
1	Community Life	Active communities, community-led planning, contribution of volunteers
2	Community Safety	Community safety, crime, fear of crime
3	Economy	Employment, income, businesses, change in key industry sectors
4	Children & Young People	Needs of children & young people
5	Learning and skills	Skills for the economy; skills for individuals
6	Environment	Climate change; resources (including waste, water, energy, air quality, countryside, land)
7	Health, care and wellbeing	Lifestyles, older people, long term conditions, vulnerable people
8	Housing	Affordability, housing for vulnerable groups, eco-homes
9	Population and migration	Ageing population, long term and short term migration trends
10	Access to services and travel	Road congestion, accessibility, safer roads, air quality, street environment
11	Recreation, leisure and culture	Participation in culture, sport, leisure activities, internet
12	Spatial Oxfordshire	South East plan, Local Development Frameworks, planning policy; rural, market towns, urban
SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS		
S1	Community-led plans and their potential contribution to strategic planning	by Gloucestershire University (May 2007) Analysis of the priorities from 30 community-led parish and market town plans completed in past 5 years in Oxfordshire
S2	Priorities from Oxford Area Action plans	by Oxford City Council (July 2007) Priorities from six Oxford City area action plans
S3	Oxfordshire Rural Framework (2007-2010)	by Oxfordshire Rural Forum (July 2007) Challenges and priorities for rural Oxfordshire