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1 AYLESBURY VALE – A UNIQUE DISTRICT

The district of Aylesbury Vale is unique and distinct. Covering 90,275 hectares, the district accounts for approximately 50% of the area of the County of Buckinghamshire. Its boundaries touch four other counties – Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire – and eight other districts.

Aylesbury Vale's population of 161,000 is spread between the two major towns of Aylesbury (population 57,000) and Buckingham (11,000), the larger villages of Haddenham (5,000), Wendover (7,000), and Winslow (4,500), and a myriad of smaller rural villages and settlements that are an essential part of the character and life of the district. There are, in total, 112 parishes within Aylesbury Vale.

The Annual Employment Survey showed that in recent years, after Milton Keynes, Aylesbury Vale has the largest employment growth rate in Buckinghamshire. By employment category some 76% of employees in the district work in the service industries. Although a relatively small percentage of total employees, the 3.4% that work in agriculture, hunting and forestry is nearly three times the national average, re-emphasising the contribution the rural parts of the district make to the overall local economy.

The fast transport links, particularly from Aylesbury, in and out of London make the southern part of the district accessible for commuters, and just beyond the north of the district Milton Keynes also provides major employment opportunities. Aylesbury Vale is therefore well placed for people wishing to work both within and outside of its boundaries. With a few exceptions, this accessibility relies heavily on private transport, with its attendant environmental and social implications, and convenient travel both across and beyond the district is difficult on public transport.

Overall, the socioeconomic profile of Aylesbury Vale indicates a relatively affluent population. However, this fact masks specific areas of social deprivation and social problems that exist within the district.

In terms of age profile the district has a higher than average proportion of young people and families.

One of the major challenges facing Aylesbury Vale is its rapid growth. 8,600 new homes are proposed to be built between 2001 and 2011, in addition to the 7000 built in the previous decade. Of the proposed new growth, three quarters will take place in and around Aylesbury – from 1991 to 2011, the town will have grown by a third. The remainder will be concentrated at Buckingham, Wendover, Haddenham and Winslow. This expansion has significant implications, and not only in terms of provision of transport, employment, and educational and cultural facilities. There are also issues of how the developments and their new residents are to be integrated into existing communities.

Aylesbury Vale is also culturally diverse. In the district's main town of Aylesbury there is a strong and thriving multi-cultural community. Some 5% of the town's population are classified as being from one of the Asian ethnic groups – approximately 50% above the national average - with a further 2% of the population being of Black Caribbean, Black African or other Black origin.

This broad cultural mix of rural and ethnic communities, villages and towns, urban and countryside areas help define the unique "culture" of Aylesbury Vale.

2 A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR AYLESBURY VALE

2.1 The Commission

The “Culture” of Aylesbury Vale encompasses many aspects. To ensure that a strategic approach to culture could be developed to encompass and supply guidance to all providers across the District, and to the many agencies and partners whose work is influenced and enhanced by cultural provision, Aylesbury Vale District Council commissioned the production of this *Cultural Strategy* to cover the five years from 2002 to 2007.

2.2 The Methodology

The Strategy’s preparation has included desk research into the many policies of, and surveys undertaken by, the District Council and other local, regional and national agencies. Primary research has also been undertaken into the views of the Parish Councils and residents in the District through a household survey. Consultations have taken place with many officers across the district, within the County and beyond, and with a wide range of agencies, organisations, and neighbouring local authorities. Thanks go to the many people who contributed to this Strategy, and to the many people who will continue to do so through their comments and feedback on this draft.

2.3 The Role of the Strategy

This Strategy is not a “service plan” for District or County Council departments, nor an action plan for the day-to-day provision of culture. It is not a replacement for activity specific strategies, such as sport, the arts or tourism. Its aim is to identify the key issues, establish a shared vision for the future development of culture in Aylesbury Vale, and set key objectives and targets for the achievement of that vision. From this local authority departments and agencies, voluntary providers and commercial operators can set their annual plans which will contribute to the vision and the realisation of the objectives.

One of the greatest benefits of the strategy is the advocacy role. At a time of financial constraint on public bodies and general fears about the “dumbing down” of society, the strategy’s key role is to keep culture at the centre of attention. It will ensure that cultural activities are not regarded as unaffordable luxuries but as essential components in the development of life within Aylesbury Vale. It will ensure that Culture is recognised as being central to the development of the communities and economy of the district.

By setting the cultural agenda, this strategy will also prompt positive action in areas, which would otherwise be overlooked. It will help to break down barriers between the public, private and voluntary sectors and between areas of activity e.g. arts and sport which have traditionally seen little common ground; by doing so it will create links between service providers. Most importantly it will provide the opportunity for all providers of cultural activities to contribute towards a co-ordinated delivery of culture, based on the needs of the people of Aylesbury Vale.

3 THE MEANING OF CULTURE

3.1 A Definition of Culture

The word “culture” can mean many things - the culture of a particular community, or “high arts” activities such as opera or theatre. It is also about values and attitudes, which enhance the quality of life. Culture is about the quality of the rural and urban environment in which people live and work. Its breadth encompasses the design and architecture of the area, its heritage and history, art, literature, sport, the many other activities that people take part in, and the opportunities available to do so. It is also about people's sense of identity, their values and the way in which they interact with their local communities. It is about their beliefs and faiths around which much cultural activity can be focused.

There are many definitions of the term culture. The government’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) include the following activities within culture:

- the performing and visual arts, craft, fashion, media, film, television;
- museums, archives, design; libraries, literature, publishing;
- the built heritage, architecture, landscape, archaeology;
- sports events, facilities and activities;
- parks open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment, and countryside recreation;
- children’s play, playgrounds, and play activities;
- tourism, festivals and attractions; and informal leisure pursuits.

3.2 The Benefits of Culture

Culture and cultural activity cannot be seen as peripheral or separate from other quality of life and social issues. Cultural activities, in whatever form, enrich the lives of their participants and of the community as a whole. These activities be they music, literature, dance or football allow people an outlet for their creativity and self-expression which they may not have through work or domestic duties. They have a value beyond pure monetary and utilitarian measures.

The key components of culture are crucial to the quality of life of people who live and work in Aylesbury Vale. The district's parks, its countryside, its leisure facilities, festivals and events, the opportunity it provides for children and adults to take up and learn new activities, its sense of history and heritage - all are part of the fabric of living, without which people's lives would be immeasurably poorer.

In 1999 the DCMS published a report by Policy Action Team 10, one of 18 teams set up to investigate the effect of cultural activities on social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal. The report concluded that:

“Arts and sport, cultural and recreational activity, can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities.”

Sport England (the national body for sport), also in 1999, published *The Value of Sport*. The report highlights through case studies and research the contribution sport makes to national and international pride, to community safety, to healthy lifestyles, to community regeneration, to economic growth and to sustaining the environment. Many of the report's findings, whilst the details may differ, are as relevant to other cultural activities as they are to sport.

The Local Government Association's report *The Road to Regeneration* also stresses the benefits of culture's contribution to improving the overall quality of life.

The government's spokesperson for Regional Cultural Strategies links cultural activities to a sense of community:

"Our sense of community is shaped by what we do and experience in cinemas, galleries, museums, libraries, concert halls and on the sports field, and through broadcast media that comes into our homes. Our economy benefits from new jobs that tourism, leisure services and creative industries are generating. Culture has an important role to play in the regeneration of local communities and, as the Policy Action Team (PAT) 10 report has highlighted, it can make a major contribution to tackling social exclusion right across the country".

(Janet Anderson MP, Under Secretary of State, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, December 1999)

This **economic impact** of culture is one that is being increasingly recognised. With a quality infrastructure of cultural facilities and opportunities – irrespective of whether these are provided by the public, voluntary, commercial or private sectors – it will be easier to persuade companies and people to relocate to the district, and it will also help encourage young people to stay. Major regeneration success stories have been built around investment in culture, sport and leisure – Birmingham in England, Glasgow in Scotland, and Barcelona in Spain are just a few examples. Within Aylesbury Vale the practical value of culture is demonstrable. In October 1996 the Southern Tourist Board Visitor Research Service produced a report – *The Economic Impact of Tourism in Aylesbury Vale District*. Tourism, as just one part of culture within the district, was estimated to generate some £106 million per annum to the district's economy, directly and indirectly sustaining over 3,000 jobs.

In 2001 the impact of the foot and mouth crisis highlighted in a dramatic way the importance of access to, and enjoyment of the countryside for a huge number of people. Whether it is simply to walk in a park, exercise the dog or visit countryside attractions. And this impact is not just recreational - it is economic, with a significant adverse impact on income from tourism resulting from closure of large tracts of country areas.

Culture, particularly in the form of recreation and sport, is also important in tackling **health** issues. A lack of physical activity is a main risk factor for heart disease and strokes. With the decline in physical activity in everyday life and work, sport and physical recreation now account for the most vigorous activity that a person may engage in.

Children and young people need a balanced education – mental, spiritual, physical and social. The potential exists through culture to develop young people's ethical perspectives and instil responsible and enjoyable citizenship. In terms of healthy lifestyles, children are less active and less fit than in times past. Lifestyles have

changed; there are greater perceived risks in travelling alone and playing away from home; and increased access to passive leisure and entertainment, all resulting in play, recreation, and exercise diminishing. Healthy young people, who have skills for sports and leisure activities and life skills, make for more fulfilled people. Inactive children are likely to become inactive adults, increasing the risks of obesity and heart disease.

Culture can also be successfully used to address **social issues** in children and young people addressing the fear of crime through provision of alternative outlets for their energies; drug problems – providing a positive route away from drugs and addiction; social inclusion – providing a mechanism to integrate individuals and groups into their local communities.

4 CULTURE IN AYLESBURY VALE

4.1 *The Cradles of Culture*

With the benefits of culture so clear, it is evident that the larger the number of people involved, the greater will be the overall benefit to individuals and to the community as a whole. Participation is not, however, automatic. The *opportunity* to take part and try out new activities is important, particularly in the crucial early years of life where the opportunities provided through education, sports and arts development work can influence participation well into adult life.

Starting cultural activity at any time in adult life will bring rewards, although it is often more difficult to start a new activity when there is not an entrenched “habit” of participation. *Encouragement* and easy *access* to opportunities are therefore essential elements in developing adult participation.

The *cradles* of culture are Aylesbury Vale’s schools, arts and leisure centres (public and private), community halls, clubs, countryside, outreach development programmes and the many dedicated and enthusiastic individuals who devote their time - many voluntarily - to the development of cultural activity. They are also the health service, social services, community services and many other related organisations that can, in their own way, encourage individuals and groups to take part in cultural activity for the benefit of their health, mental, physical and social welfare.

To maximise the benefit of these *cradles of culture* to the district as a whole, means these organisations and individuals working in partnerships towards achieving a common vision.

4.2 *A Vibrant District*

4.2.1 Introduction

Aylesbury Vale is rich in cultural provision, facilities and initiatives. This is not to say that there are not gaps in provision or changes to the focus of provision that can be made to better meet the needs of a diverse and changing district. It is worth highlighting a selection that illustrates this cultural richness. The following examines some of the current provision and opportunities for each of the main activities that make up the term “culture”.

4.2.2 Sport

In sporting terms Aylesbury Vale has a good mix of provision. The new Aqua Vale Pool in Aylesbury provides a state of the art competition and leisure pool that will attract users from across the district and beyond. This is supplemented by the Swan Pool in Buckingham, with its mix of indoor and outdoor facilities. The major redevelopment of the Guttmann Sports Centre at Stoke Mandeville – home of the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation – will provide top quality competition facilities for both disability sport and the local community, and will add to much needed dryside indoor sports provision for Aylesbury. The County Council's community use policy for its schools ensures that a range of clubs and organisations have use of educational facilities, and more locally based sports facilities in the villages and parishes provide for some of the local need.

The recently researched *Aylesbury Vale Playing Pitch Strategy* has identified that provision of pitches, courts and bowls greens is largely in line with local need although specific needs have been identified in the Buckingham area, and some of the ancillary facilities do not meet current customer requirements.

The Silverstone racing circuit that straddles the boundary of Aylesbury Vale is attracting major reinvestment and brings around a million people to the area each year, with the Grand Prix alone generating some £30 million for the local economy.

There are a range of notable sports development programmes run by the district council and a collaborative venture with other Buckinghamshire authorities on Coach Development schemes. Action Sport is another collaborative venture across Buckinghamshire, which is developing a wide range of sporting opportunities for young people.

Aylesbury College provides a range of academic and vocational sport and leisure courses to help develop the providers and managers of the future. There is much scope to develop opportunities for further community use of educational, military and private club facilities across the Vale.

4.2.3 The Arts

The main body for the arts in Aylesbury Vale is the Aylesbury Vale Arts Council. The council is a membership organisation employing a part time officer to administer its activities. Financially supported by Aylesbury Vale District Council, the Arts Council provides grant aid to support both arts organisations and individuals, organises major collaborative events such as Arts 2000 and has recently undertaken a commission for a new public work of art within Aylesbury.

The key venues for arts development and performance within the Vale are the Queens Park Arts Centre and the Civic Centre both based within Aylesbury. The Queens Park Arts Centre is a small and vibrant centre, which provides a wide range of craft and workshop opportunities as well as a small theatre complex and exhibition area.

The Civic Centre is the district's major entertainment venue with the main hall boasting a capacity of 650 for seated concerts and 1100 for standing concerts. The mixed entertainment programme providing regular performances of touring theatre, stand up comedy, classical and popular music, children's entertainment and an annual professional pantomime. The Civic Centre is also home to a number of community arts organisations including the Aylesbury Dramatic and Operatic Society and the

Aylesbury Orchestra. Other important venues for the arts in the Vale include the Winslow Centre and the Well Street Centre in Buckingham.

Southern Arts have identified Aylesbury as a priority location for funding for a new Arts Centre and Aylesbury Vale District Council is currently considering the long-term provision of arts and entertainment facilities within the Aylesbury town centre.

Other major festivals located within the Vale are the Buckingham Summer Festival, the Wendover Music Season as well as significant outdoor Music Events such as the Music and Firework and Battle Prom Concerts at Stowe Landscape Gardens.

A number of impressive touring schemes have been developed for the rural areas of the Vale including the Theatre in the Villages Scheme and Music in Quiet Places programme. Local community involvement including the local management of events is a vital element to these schemes.

Many county wide groups also play a vital role within the development of arts within the Vale, these include the Visual Images Group who co-ordinate the annual Bucks Arts Week and Bucks Dance whose "Next Generation" programme offers access to dance opportunities for young people and the "Soundstudio" project which offers hands on recording studio and DJ technology opportunities for young people.

4.2.4 Tourism

The Vale of Aylesbury is relatively well served in terms of the range and quality of visitor attractions. The National Trust Properties at Stowe, Claydon and Waddesdon Manor are complemented by family attractions such as the Oak Farm Rare Breeds Park and the Roald Dahl Gallery at the Buckinghamshire County Museum. The single largest visitor attractions within the Vale in terms of visitor numbers are the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit, which straddles the Northamptonshire border, and the Stockgrove Country Park on the Bedfordshire border.

The Vale's intrinsic appeal for many visitors is the network of countryside attractions including walks, country parks and cycle and bridleways aligned to the charm of small market towns such as Buckingham and Wendover. One of the major challenges within the tourism sector in Aylesbury Vale is the development and promotion of these facilities in a sustainable manner.

Recent accommodation studies have highlighted a shortfall in both serviced and non-serviced accommodation throughout the Vale particularly for the weekday business market. Developments within both Aylesbury and Buckingham have partly addressed this problem although there is still a clear need for town centre hotel provision within Aylesbury and campsite facilities throughout the Vale.

Information for visitors is provided directly via three Tourist Information Centres at Aylesbury, Buckingham and Wendover. The way in which visitors access information continues to develop including the use of electronic media such as the Internet, through printed publicity material, or in person.

The local authorities within Buckinghamshire have recently produced the Buckinghamshire Tourism Marketing Strategy covering the period 2001-2004. This strategy outlines policies and action plans for the joint development of tourism, issues highlighted within the strategy are the collection and use of relevant tourism information and statistics, ensuring a quality experience for visitors, providing

services for the group travel market and delivering targeted information and visitor packages

The Aylesbury Vale area is currently serviced by the Southern Tourist Board and forms part of their northern sector known as the Thames & Chilterns Country. Amongst the services offered in this area is the Tourism Better Business Scheme a European Social Fund training programme for the industry. A review of both the Southern and South East Tourist Boards is currently being undertaken to ensure that opportunities offered by Regional Government are maximised within this area.

4.2.5 Museums and Heritage

Over the past five years the Vale has been host to two National Museum of the Year award winners in the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury and Waddesdon Manor.

Other accredited museums within the Vale include the Buckingham Old Gaol Museum, which has recently received Heritage Lottery funding to develop its educational facilities, and the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre with one of the largest collections of steam locomotives within the country.

British Waterways are currently exploring plans to link the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union canal to the main national canal network via an extension via Bedford. This link would provide far wider usage of the Aylesbury Arm providing easier access to the canal network within the Fens. This proposed development follows on from a study of the Aylesbury Arm of the Canal, which recommended ways in which the recreational use of the canal could be increased.

The South Eastern Museum service offers a co-ordinating service to enable all museums within the county of Buckinghamshire to network and share best practice. This initiative has so far met with limited success.

The Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service plays an important role in offering advice on planning applications, maintaining a comprehensive record of archaeological sites and monuments and in countryside conservation and access projects.

Both the Buckingham Society and the Aylesbury Society play vital roles in raising awareness of the built heritage of their respective towns. Notable initiatives include the co-ordination and promotion of annual Heritage Open Day events and production of historic town trails. Within Buckingham the local society are currently involved, along with the Civic Trust, in the production of a local design statement whilst the Aylesbury Society have for a number of years produced a series of plaques celebrating landmark buildings within the town. Local Societies have played central roles in developing thriving partnership work within the towns of Aylesbury, Buckingham and Wendover.

There remains much scope for co-ordinating the efforts of heritage organisations throughout the Vale particularly through the work of the Buckinghamshire Records and Local Studies Service whose lottery supported Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies will open in 2002. Many local Agenda 21 initiatives such as the recently produced Living Archive Project for the Vale should also be further encouraged.

4.2.6 The Countryside

Aylesbury Vale contains large tracts of attractive and accessible countryside. From open fields to woodlands and riverside walks, canals to lakes, there are a rich variety of landscapes and natural habitats. Initiatives such as the Aylesbury Countryside Management Project, the Grand Union Canal corridor study, the Thame Valley walk, and circular cycle routes all contribute towards residents and visitors enjoyment of the countryside. The Bernwood Forest project is a major environmental and educational initiative to raise awareness and re-establish the ancient royal hunting forest which covered much of Aylesbury Vale.

The countryside is part of the heritage of the district, and interpretation, understanding and appreciation of it by the district's residents is an important element in helping to conserve and protect this important natural resource.

4.2.7 Community

Cultural activity does not automatically fall under neat headings. Often projects and provision embrace more than one aspect of culture, or the different elements of culture contribute to achieving wider community aims.

Culture is also about people within their local communities being able to organise an event or party, or a meeting or fund raising activity. The many community centres and village halls across the district, provided by the district and parish councils, religious organisations and community groups, are a crucial part of the infrastructure of culture and community life. The *Aylesbury Vale Village Halls Guide* sets out details of the large number of such buildings across the district, whilst the provision in Aylesbury Town is listed separately. Some of the more recently provided community halls are designed for multi-purpose use, including being suitable for some sports. Others, such as the Aylesbury Vale Multi-Cultural Centre provide an important resource for community groups that reflect the diverse make up of the district. Some, such as the Up Town Coffee Bar, provide an important base for proactive and positive work with young people as well as links with other health and social service agencies.

The many faiths within the district are also part of its culture and provide cultural opportunities and facilities, both individually and working in partnership together, such as the *Churches Together* project.

Projects such as the Aylesbury Vale Visual Archive ensure that the community history and culture of the district is preserved and promoted whilst the District Council's Leisure Grants schemes provide much needed financial assistance to cultural groups and organisations across the district.

Play provision can be through the many publicly and privately run nurseries, crèches, and after school clubs. Local playgrounds can provide for some of the physical play needs of young children, although some of the district's parishes do not have playgrounds and there are issues about land for such provision and the funding of their ongoing maintenance that need to be explored.

Other community cultural provision includes the district's libraries, operated by the County Council, which are a hugely important cultural resource, and adult learning which supplies cultural as well as vocational courses. The potential to create more strategic linkages between the course programmes for cultural activities run by various agencies clearly exists.

5 THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

5.1 Introduction

This Strategy is not being produced in a vacuum. There are a large number of national and local strategies, plans and policies produced by bodies as wide ranging as the Government's departments of Culture, Media and Sport or Education, Trade and Industry, Sport England, the English Tourist Board, the Arts Council of England, the Regional Cultural Consortium, South East England Development Agency, Buckinghamshire County Council and many more, that are relevant to this Strategy, and which need to be considered when setting out the future framework for culture in Aylesbury Vale.

However, in what is a rapidly evolving national and local position, new policies, consultation documents, and initiatives are constantly emerging. This section of the Strategy must therefore be seen as a "snapshot" of some of the key policies at a certain point in time. It should not be seen as definitive, but as setting out some of the main influences that will guide this Strategy.

5.2 Regional and Sub Regional Strategies

5.2.1 The Cultural Cornerstone – A Strategy for the development of Cultural Activity and its benefits in the South East

The Cultural Cornerstone is the regional cultural strategy for the south east of England, which includes Buckinghamshire. Released in June 2001 it has been produced by the South East England Cultural Consortium, a body representing a wide range of cultural and other interests across the south east region.

The strategy highlights six key challenges facing the development of culture in the region. These are:

- Ensuring opportunities and support are available for *all* members of the community (the challenge of **inclusion**);
- Ensuring that the region remains at the cutting edge of developments in practice and provision (the challenge of **excellence**);
- Ensuring the formal and informal institutions of teaching and learning are best harnessed in support of improved "quality of life" for individuals and for groups across the region (the challenge of **learning**);
- Ensuring the perception and impact of the cultural sector in meeting major social, economic and environmental objectives for the region is raised (the challenge of **recognition**);
- Ensuring the best is done to enable and support strategic and tactical alliances between players within the cultural arena, and between them and other important partners *and* help to "join up" the region's cultural assets –

to fill gaps, to achieve synergy, and to minimise unhelpful competition and duplication (the challenge of **partnership and cohesion**);

- Maintaining and increasing the public and private resources necessary for effective delivery of the strategy (the challenge of **support**).

The strategy sets out a number of actions for each challenge. A selection of these is given below.

- Greater participation in cultural activities, particularly among both young and older people, socially disadvantaged communities, those with disabilities, and others who might feel themselves excluded;
- Improvements in transport, on a number of levels;
- The regular use of schools, libraries and other educational institutions as cultural centres;
- More examples of high quality building design in regeneration projects; improving design for new buildings, representing the contribution of the modern era to the heritage of the future;
- Systematic engagement of educational institutions at all levels in the cultural agenda;
- Accredited training for volunteers across the cultural sectors;
- Specific cultural representation on all of the new local strategic partnerships and other relevant partnerships involved in leading and co-ordinating quality of life initiatives in communities and neighbourhoods;
- Positive acknowledgement of the contribution of ethnic minorities to the cultural life of the region;
- Engagement of all of the cultural agencies and local authorities with young adults' cultural activities and interests, including music and dancing;
- More resources for communities to develop their own capacity for participation in cultural life.

5.2.2 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Rural Strategy 2001-2002

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Rural Strategy 2001 is a further development of the strategy produced in January 1999 in response to the challenges facing the rural areas of the county and the issues highlighted within the Urban and Rural White Papers and Local Government Act 2000, which have encouraged local partnerships to produce integrated rural strategies.

The strategy covers a wide range of issues and sets out some practical actions for addressing these. In relation to “Sense of Community” and “Quality of Life” four key issues were identified through a rural audit as needing new action. These were: reduced sense of community; lower expectations of services; urbanisation of the countryside; and fears over rural crime. Cultural provision is a key element in

addressing these issues. The action plan aims to stimulate greater community spirit and encouraged local community initiatives by ensuring four elements are in place. These are:

- **A place to meet** - village hall, church, school, pub function room, people's houses
- **A reason to come together** - festivals, social occasions, sport, local history, age related activities etc
- **People prepared to organise and co-ordinate** - the movers and shakers, community leaders
- **Money** - possibly in the form of grants or loans. The availability of money is not necessarily the most important element that can act as a focus and a spur for activity.

With reference to community services and facilities the Strategy sets out a number of key objectives. These include to:

- Protect existing community buildings and village halls, promote the provision of new halls, and promote wider use of facilities;
- Resist the loss of village pubs;
- Continue the support for a county-wide network of well resourced libraries and mobile libraries;
- Encourage the continued value of rural schools as community resources; keep under review the financial issues surrounding them and consider additional sources of income;
- Encourage the provision of recreational, sport, and leisure opportunities;
- Raise the profile of the arts and the benefits they can bring.

The Strategy also points out the importance of rural tourism as a source of revenue and employment in rural areas.

5.3 Aylesbury Vale Strategies

5.3.1 Aylesbury Vale Community Plan

The Aylesbury Vale Community Plan has been produced by Aylesbury Vale District Council, following consultation with people who live and work in the Vale. The overall aim of the Plan is “to make Aylesbury Vale the best possible place for people to live and work”.

To do this the Plan identifies eight key issues that need to be dealt with, both by the Council and other partners who provide services in the District. These are:

- Community safety and reducing the fear of crime
- Supporting the environment

- Promoting economic development
- Dealing with the effects of planned development in the District
- The health improvement programme
- Housing for all
- Generating and collecting money
- Improving customer care

A number of these key issues are explored in more depth in individual strategies, which are summarised below. The actions for tackling the issues are also set out in a Community Plan policy actions document covering the next five years.

5.3.2 Community Safety Strategy and Action Plans 1999-2002

As a result of research undertaken by Aylesbury Vale District Council, Aylesbury Vale Police Area and Buckinghamshire County Council (see Section 5.7 below) a Community Safety Strategy for the District was produced. One of the seven initial priorities for action was “Improving facilities for young people”.

Objective 1 of this priority is “To develop opportunities for young people that meet their needs by:

- Researching and auditing what is already available
- Researching the needs of young people in their local communities
- Developing specific inter-agency community action plans to meet needs
- Co-ordinating parishes into consortiums to implement action plans.”

The role of cultural provision – not just “facilities” but “opportunities” – in the achievement of this objective will be a major one. Conversely the work and research into the local needs of young people that is proposed as part of the Community Safety Strategy will benefit and inform the future provision of cultural opportunities and assist the partners involved in such provision to practically plan to meet these needs.

5.3.3 Vale of Aylesbury Health Improvement Plan 2001 - 2002

The Vale of Aylesbury Health Improvement Plan (HImP) has been developed by the Vale of Aylesbury Primary Care Trust in partnership with local statutory and voluntary organisations through the existing multi-agency partnership “Health for All”. The Health for All group comprises representatives from health, education, social services, housing, environment, road safety, crime prevention, local community groups and organisations. The HImP sets out actions to improve health and tackle inequality.

The 2001 to 2002 HImP identifies a number of key areas that need to be addressed within the Vale of Aylesbury. A summary of the ones relevant to the Cultural Strategy is given below.

- **Accidents** – accidents are responsible for 10,000 deaths a year across England. In the 15 to 24 year old age group and the 65+ age group the Aylesbury Vale District Council area has the highest death rate in Buckinghamshire. Actions proposed include promoting safe exercise for older people and continuing to develop opportunities for children to learn to swim.

- **Cancers** – Cancer s account for some 120,000 deaths in England a year. The Bucks area has a lower death rate for people under 75 than England and Wales as a whole, although Aylesbury Vale District has higher rates of death from breast cancer. Preventative measures include addressing other risk factors such as obesity and lack of physical activity.
- **Coronary Heart Disease** – Coronary Heart Disease is the single most common cause of death in the United Kingdom. Whilst Buckinghamshire has lower rates of the disease than the UK average, the disease still accounts for 38% of all deaths in Buckinghamshire. The actions to address this include preventative measures such as promoting and encouraging increased physical activity, with particularly emphasis on those from more disadvantaged areas and Asian women, and rehabilitative programmes for those who have already suffered from cardiac problems.
- **Older People** – developing independence for older people and extending their years of *healthy* life rather than simply extending their lifespan are seen as key outcomes. Whilst the actions proposed do not touch upon areas of culture, clearly increased independence partly comes with improved mobility which can be helped by exercise, and self confidence which can be encouraged through social activity where arts, crafts, visits etc. are the requisite vehicle.
- **Inequalities** – whilst the health of the population within Aylesbury Vale is on the whole good in comparison with the rest of England and Wales, there are nonetheless health inequalities with pockets of relative disadvantage. Five wards in Aylesbury Town are represented in the most deprived groups in Buckinghamshire. Actions set out include multi-agency work to address quality of life issues in these areas.
- **Children and Young People** – the Action Plan sets out, amongst other goals, to develop a joint health strategy for children and young people and promote life chances for children in need. The involvement of cultural activity in overall health improvement actions for children and young people at an early stage of their development will help to encourage and develop healthy habits and lifestyles for later life.

5.3.4 Support Aylesbury Vale's Environment (SAVE)

“SAVE is the district's own Local Agenda 21 which endeavours to encourage sustainable personal lifestyles and community practices within Aylesbury Vale, which meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The SAVE strategy has been developed through wide public consultation. It has a number of main objectives revolving around protection of the environment, but also around “providing health, welfare, cultural and leisure facilities which recognise the needs of everyone...” It proposes to and meet national and international strategic objectives by:

- Education and awareness
- Practical actions/facilitating action
- An annual SAVE month of events (in May)
- Recognition of best sustainable practice through the annual SAVE Awards
- Promote and encourage sustainable practice through the SAVE Grant scheme
- Influencing public bodies' policy and plans

Culture has a key input to make in, or is a fundamental part of, the majority of these goals – from the valuing of local differences and distinctiveness, to health improvement (mental and physical), to meeting needs locally (a big issue arising from the primary research undertaken as part of this Cultural Strategy, and examined in the next section).

5.3.5 The Planning Framework

The Town & Country Planning Act requires that all development proposals should be determined in accordance with the policies and proposals of the Development Plan. In Aylesbury Vale District, the planning framework comprises the following plans.

Those produced by Buckinghamshire County Council:

- 1996 • Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan 1991-2011 (BCSP), adopted March
- 2000 • Minerals Local Plan for Buckinghamshire 1996-2006 (MLP), adopted May
- 1997; • Waste Local Plan for Buckinghamshire 1994-2006 (WLP), adopted March

Those produced by Aylesbury Vale District Council:

- Aylesbury Local Plan (ALP), adopted January 1991; and
- Aylesbury Vale (Rural Areas) Local Plan (RALP), adopted July 1995.

In addition, there is the Deposit Draft Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP), published in October 1998. AVDLP is waiting for the Inspector's Report following a Public Inquiry held to examine objections to the Plan, which ran from January 2000 to June 2001. While AVDLP is not yet a statutory part of the development plan, it does represent the Council's vision for development in the District up to 2011. As such, its policies can be used in determining planning decisions, where they reflect national policy better than the adopted plans and where they are not the subject of outstanding objections.

The Structure Plan contains policies on the broad distribution of development and infrastructure within the County. It contributes to cultural activity through a wide range of broad-brush policies on conservation of the built and natural environment, and positive enabling policies on tourism, sports and recreation development, where proposals would accord with environmental conservation principles.

The Minerals and Waste Local Plans are mainly concerned with minerals extraction and waste disposal/recycling. They do have a contribution to make to cultural objectives, for example, in terms of the after-use of minerals workings or waste landfill sites, which can provide land for recreation and nature conservation uses.

The adopted and emerging local plans (ALP, RALP and AVDLP) all contain detailed policies for the determination of planning applications, and proposals for the development of particular sites. Most of the sites identified in ALP and RALP have already been developed or are under construction.

As well as its obvious housing and employment development proposals, AVDLP includes site-specific proposals that will directly influence cultural activity and provide additional facilities. Most notable among these are policies AY.37 and AY.50 (Exchange Street North and South, Aylesbury) which should provide an arts centre

and other leisure uses including a hotel and cafés/bars/restaurants, in addition to retail, office and residential development – all linked to the canal basin and the existing town centre.

In Buckingham policy BU.14 proposes redevelopment of two sites in the town centre. These should include leisure and retail uses, along with environmental improvements, especially to the riverside walk.

The three Local Plans' policies include many that are related to conservation of the District's built and natural heritage and the promotion of high quality design. Such policies have evolved from the preservation of designated areas and specific listed buildings or trees, to a more generic approach that promotes adherence to "local distinctiveness". This means that wherever development is located it should reflect areas and features that are particularly special.

The Plans also include requirements for the provision of recreation facilities in association with new development, based on nationally accepted standards. In addition, a proposed change to the draft AVDLP recommends a policy that encourages the provision of public art in new development and dedicated arts facilities.

In promoting tourism and recreational activities, all the Plans include the requirement that these should be compatible with other Plan policies, notably those relating to the conservation of the District's built and natural heritage. This is important, as it is often these qualities of the District that attract visitors.

5.3.6 Aylesbury Vale Economic Development Action Plan.

The development of cultural facilities and opportunities is seen as central to improving the economic viability of Aylesbury Vale. Specific items within the Economic Development Action Plan which relate to culture include

- The promotion of the Vale as a visitor attraction
- Promoting the rural economy of the Vale through the support of village amenities such as pubs and shops
- Support for the development of a Buckinghamshire Food Group to assist sustainable local food production and distribution across the area.

6 CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

This Strategy needs to be based not only on the views of professional officers and organisations involved in culture, but on the feedback and views of those at the "sharp end" – the public, the users, the schools, the local communities.

A great deal of research work has already been undertaken in Aylesbury Vale as a result of other strategic planning, and this has been supplemented by additional research implemented as part of this Strategy. The following section provides a synopsis of the findings of this research and is split into the following categories:

- Residents Surveys
- Parish Council Survey
- Cultural Organisations Survey

- Public Forums
- Crime and Disorder Survey
- Survey of Young People
- Council Services Survey
- Village Appraisals
- Consultation with key organisations and District and County Council officers.

6.2 Residents' Survey

As part of the development of this Cultural Strategy, a Household Survey was undertaken within the District. The Survey was conducted by qualified market researchers and the sample size and profile was chosen to provide statistically valid data and reflect the profile of the District's population as a whole. A smaller secondary sample of young people was also undertaken where they were available to be interviewed in addition to the main adult survey.

A great amount of data was collected as a result of this survey, and it is possible to cross-tabulate responses to individual questions by gender, age, socio-economic grouping, disability, household size and ethnicity. Responses were also correlated by the area of Aylesbury Vale in which respondents lived, and a definition of these areas is shown in Map A. The following is a brief summary of the main points arising from the survey.

6.2.1 Perception of Location

It was considered important to discover how residents within the different geographical areas of Aylesbury Vale generally described themselves as being located, and hence the areas with which they most identified themselves. Respondents were therefore asked to describe where they lived after they had given the name of their town or village.

The majority of respondents from Aylesbury Town described themselves as coming from Aylesbury Vale (54%), with the second most popular description being "in Buckinghamshire" (34%). In Buckingham Town these two descriptions were split equally at 45% each. In Central Aylesbury Vale 83% described themselves as being "in Buckinghamshire".

However, when the responses from other rural parts of the district were analysed a different picture emerged. Not surprisingly 62% of the northern part of the district described themselves as being "near Milton Keynes". "Near Aylesbury" was the description used by 45% of respondents from the eastern area (a further 23% considered themselves as being "near Dunstable"), and by 66% of the southern area.

The most diverse range of responses came from the western area of the district, where the highest percentage (30%) described themselves as coming from Buckinghamshire, 20% from Aylesbury Vale, 19% near Thame, and 14% near Bicester. Surprisingly the identification with Oxford came from only 9% of respondents.

6.2.2 Description of Community

Respondents were then asked to describe the community they lived in, being given three options – “As a close knit local community with its own special identity”, “As a community that is increasingly losing its own identity” and “Not a close knit community with any special sense of identity”.

Across Aylesbury Vale the highest proportion (37 per cent) of residents described themselves as living in a "close knit community". However, almost as many (33 per cent) considered that this was not the case, and that there was "no special identity". The responses become clearer when analysed by the areas in which respondents live. Only 28 per cent of Aylesbury Town residents considered they lived in a "close knit" community, whilst 50 per cent felt the opposite, and 20 per cent felt their community was losing its identity.

There was a stronger sense of identity for Buckingham town residents with 37 per cent believing there was a "close knit" community. However, 41 per cent felt the community was increasingly losing its identity.

It was in rural areas that the sense of identity was strongest, with 54 per cent of Central Aylesbury Vale considering there was a close-knit community, and 44 per cent of Western and Southern Aylesbury Vale. Responses from Eastern Aylesbury Vale were more evenly split between the categories, although the greatest percentage (39 per cent) felt there was a strong sense of identity. Interestingly, however, a third of respondents from Central Aylesbury Vale felt they were not a close knit community.

The strong feeling that communities in Aylesbury Town lacked a sense of identity and of community, and concern in Buckingham and some of the rural areas that the sense of community is in danger of being lost, is of concern, particularly in view of the major housing development plans for Aylesbury and the surrounding areas. Culture can be seen as an important tool in addressing this concern.



Aylesbury Postcode Districts

-  HP19
-  HP20
-  HP21



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6.2.3 Quality of life

Respondents were then asked what it was like to live in their area. Across Aylesbury Vale 67 per cent replied that it was "very good" or "good" and that they had everything, or most things, that they wanted or needed.

When responses were analysed by the age of respondents there was a wider variation, with the youngest age group (16 to 24 years of age) being least satisfied, with 57 per cent stating that it was only OK or not very good, or very poor to live in their area. In general levels of satisfaction rose with the age of respondents.

When responses were analysed by the area in which respondents live, Buckingham Town residents were by some way the most content, with 43 per cent describing the area as "very good" with "everything I want or need", and a further 37 per cent describing it as "good". This could be aggregated into a combined score of 80 per cent for being "good" as opposed to "neutral" or "poor").

Overall, people in every area of the district were comparatively happy with the quality of life where they lived, with the responses in the two "good" categories accounting for two-thirds to three-quarters of the responses. This should not hide the fact, however, that some 39 per cent of respondents from Aylesbury Town, and over one-third of respondents from rural North Bucks and Central Aylesbury Vale felt improvements could be made.

6.2.4 Improvements to Community Infrastructure

Those that felt at least some improvements could be made to where they live i.e. those that didn't respond that the area where they lived was "very good", were asked what improvements were needed. They were given a list of items including "Leisure, sports, arts, cultural facilities and opportunities", "better public transport", "more shops", "lower crime and vandalism levels", "more opportunities to meet other local people", and "further information about local events and activities". Respondents could list more than one item.

Across Aylesbury Vale the two highest responses were for more leisure, sport and cultural facilities or opportunities and better public transport, both achieving a 43 per cent response.

When analysed by age the greatest demand in both the 16-24 and 25-34 year old age groups were for better leisure facilities and opportunities (62 per cent and 58 per cent respectively). This demand decreased with age, although leisure facilities still remained the highest requirement of all the options across the age ranges until 55 years plus, when "better public transport" became quite noticeably the top priority.

In terms of employment status, those "not working" or in "Education" set their priorities firmly as being "better public transport". More leisure facilities were also a notably higher priority in households with children than those without. When analysed by area Central Aylesbury Vale, Eastern Aylesbury Vale and Western Aylesbury Vale set a high priority on more leisure facilities and opportunities, whereas the rural North Bucks and Buckingham areas put "better public transport" above sport and leisure facilities. Aylesbury respondents put lower crime and vandalism on an equal footing with leisure as their top two improvements, whereas Southern Aylesbury Vale put "more shops" as their key improvement.

6.2.5 Improvements to Sport and Leisure Facilities

Those respondents who wished to see more leisure opportunities and facilities were asked what in particular they would like see provided. A range of options were suggested. Across the Vale the three most requested requirements were "more local things for teenagers to do" (41 per cent of respondents), "a local indoor sport or swimming centre" (35 per cent), and "more local things for children to do" (32 per cent). Table 1 sets out the main results.

When looked at by age group "more local things for teenagers to do" was the most requested improvement not only in the 16-24 year age group, but by the 45-54 year olds (58 per cent) and 65 plus (57 per cent). 45 per cent of the younger age group also requested a wider variety of clubs and organisations.

IMPROVEMENTS	TOTAL	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
More local things for teenagers to do	41%	58%	20%	31%	58%	30%	57%
A Local indoor sports/swimming centre	35%	37%	41%	34%	26%	20%	43%
More local things for children to do	32%	37%	22%	47%	23%	50%	14%
A wider variety of clubs and organisations	25%	45%	15%	19%	26%	20%	-
Local opportunities to watch live arts and entertainment events	22%	16%	24%	16%	35%	30%	-
Better transport to existing leisure and recreation facilities outside of my immediate area	22%	26%	10%	19%	32%	30%	29%
More local things for older people to do	18%	21%	10%	6%	13%	60%	57%
Cheaper charges to use existing leisure and recreation facilities	16%	29%	12%	3%	19%	20%	14%
Local outdoor sports facilities	16%	16%	20%	13%	13%	20%	14%
Local opportunity to learn/try out new skills and activities	14%	11%	10%	16%	16%	30%	29%
The opportunity in general to learn new skills and activities	13%	11%	10%	9%	19%	30%	14%
A local park	8%	8%	10%	6%	6%	10%	14%
More sports coaching	8%	13%	-	9	16	-	-
A local community centre with rooms for hire for functions	4%	11%	-	-	3%	20%	-
A local playground	4%	5%	5%	3%	-	10%	-
A local library	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	-	14%

IMPROVEMENTS	TOTAL	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
More things for other particular groups of people	3%	3%	-	-	3%	30%	-
Something else	8%	3%	12%	13%	6%	-	-
Don't know	1%	-	5%	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Suggested *Improvements* to Leisure, Sports, Arts and Cultural Facilities – by Aylesbury Vale Total and Age

Between one fifth to a third of respondents wanted better transport to existing leisure and recreation facilities outside their area. A higher than average proportion of 55-64 year-olds (30 per cent) wanted the opportunity to learn new skills and activities and 60 per cent of this age group wanted "more local things for older people to do", compared to an overall district average of 18 per cent.

When the results are analysed by area there were some notable variations. The requirement for "more local things for teenagers to do" was particularly high in Western Aylesbury Vale (65 per cent) and Southern Aylesbury Vale (45 per cent). Conversely only 15 per cent of respondents from Central Aylesbury Vale considered this as a priority.

The demand for a local indoor sport or swimming centre was noticeably high in Central Aylesbury Vale (60 per cent), Eastern Aylesbury Vale (50 per cent) and Western Aylesbury Vale (48 per cent), and relatively low in Aylesbury (23 per cent) and Buckingham (22 per cent).

However a high percentage of Buckingham respondents wanted more local things for children to do (44 per cent) as did Eastern Aylesbury Vale (42 per cent) and Western Aylesbury Vale (some 48 per cent). Notably the residents of both Aylesbury and Buckingham registered, at 33 per cent, the highest need for more local things for older people to do.

6.2.6 Activities Taken Part In

All respondents were then asked what leisure activities they took part in. The results are listed in Table 2. The importance of parks and open spaces and the countryside comes out clearly, as does access to more commercial leisure provision (cinema, restaurants, pubs) and libraries. However, the high percentage of people who took part in a wide variety of cultural activity highlights the importance of ensuring a range of provision is maintained.

ACTIVITIES TAKEN PART IN	TOTAL	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Use your local park for walking and informal recreation	65%	55%	74%	76%	68%	68%	48%
Use or take children to your local playground	38%	39%	57%	59%	30%	22%	14%
Participate in sport	49%	54%	64%	54%	47%	53%	24%

Watch sport as a spectator, other than on TV	47%	46%	57%	56%	48%	39%	31%
Take part in an arts activity such as drama, dance, crafts etc.	24%	32%	30%	29%	26%	20%	9%
Attend a live arts or entertainment event	55%	55%	65%	64%	60%	54%	31%
Go to the cinema	71%	89%	95%	81%	72%	49%	35%
Go to a restaurant to eat out	89%	82%	98%	90%	98%	88%	80%
Go to a bar or pub	74%	85%	95%	85%	76%	58%	45%
Use a library	66%	61%	72%	68%	76%	61%	55%
Go to your local community centre	32%	31%	42%	25%	43%	25%	27%
Visit a museum	50%	34%	59%	47%	64%	51%	45%
Visit an historical attraction	55%	41%	63%	52%	71%	59%	43%
Visit the countryside either driving or walking	86%	76%	95%	87%	95%	86%	75%
Gardening/horticulture	59%	27%	55%	56%	80%	78%	58%
I.T. related activity	47%	59%	60%	55%	59%	36%	11%
None of these	2%	1%	-	-	-	2%	8%

Table 2: Cultural Activities Taken Part in – All Respondents by Total and Age

6.2.7 Location of Cultural Activity

Respondents were then asked where they go to take part in cultural activities. 97 per cent of Aylesbury residents, not surprisingly, used Aylesbury, as did a high proportion of residents of Eastern (52 per cent), Western (66 per cent) and Southern (68 per cent) Aylesbury Vale.

90 per cent of Buckingham residents use Buckingham, as do 78 per cent of those in Central Aylesbury Vale.

55 per cent of rural North Bucks residents use Milton Keynes. A high proportion of the rural areas also go elsewhere in addition to the destinations listed. Surprisingly, neither Oxford nor High Wycombe featured strongly as a cultural destination for or any part of the Vale.

The above analysis emphasises the importance of the district's two main urban areas – Aylesbury and Buckingham – as key hubs for cultural life for residents from many parts of the district.

6.2.8 Method of Transport

79 per cent of respondents used the car as their method of transport to cultural and leisure activities. This was by far the most popular method of travel. However, a surprisingly high number of people stated that they travel by foot (67 per cent). This result indicates the high use of cultural facilities close to where people live, often within their village or as part of a community group

With the exception of 16-24 year olds (29% of respondents in this age group), the bus came a poor third at 11 per cent of all respondents. Again, this highlights the lack of options people are faced with in accessing cultural opportunities, this is particularly relevant in the evening and at weekends and from rural areas of the Vale.

6.2.9 Activities would like to do

54 per cent of all respondents stated that they would like to take part in cultural activities more often. There was a notable gender difference in the response with 59 per cent of females stating this, compared to 48 per cent of males - indicating a need for more focus on publicising or providing opportunities for women.

The main reasons given for not taking part more often were "lack of time" (47 per cent) and "lack of local opportunity" (33 per cent). "Too expensive" featured for 29 per cent of respondents, although this rose to 52 per cent for the 65 year-olds plus. It was not a particular issue for the younger age groups, nor was lack of adequate transport.

When examined by area, lack of local opportunities was a much bigger issue for the rural areas than Aylesbury and Buckingham.

6.2.10 District Council Facilities

Respondents were asked whether they had used any District Council leisure and cultural facilities within the previous twelve months. The Council's parks received the highest level of response with 44% of respondents having used them in the past year. This was followed by the Aylesbury Civic Centre (37%) and the Maxwell Pool and Fitness Centre (29%). Only 22% of respondents had not used any directly provided Council leisure facilities.

Clearly the proportion of respondents using particular facilities varied according to their location. Whilst overall only 16% of Aylesbury Vale residents used the Swan Pool and Leisure Centre in Buckingham, this rose to 67% of Buckingham respondents and 54% of Central Aylesbury Vale respondents. Similarly, the Maxwell Pool attracted its greatest usage from Aylesbury (40% of Aylesbury respondents), Western (38%) and Southern (35%) Aylesbury Vale. The Civic Centre in Aylesbury attracted a more even geographical spread of users with the exception of Buckingham Town.

The responses highlight the importance of making accessible local provision.

6.2.11 Importance of Factors in Quality of Life

Lastly, the responses from the surveys were collated into a "quality of life" index in relation to cultural activities. A score of +2 indicated an issue/activity that was considered "Very Important", whilst -2 was "Not at all Important". Any score, therefore, over +1 would rank as being between "Important" to "Very Important". The following scored more than +1:

- Things for teenagers to do (1.63)
- Parks and green spaces (1.58)
- Things for children to do (1.56)
- Indoor sports and swimming centres (1.44)
- Playgrounds (1.41)
- Outdoor Sports Facilities (1.33)
- Things for older people to do (1.31)

- Libraries (1.25)
- Public Transport to existing leisure and recreation facilities (1.25)
- Cheaper charges (1.09).

6.3 Parish Council Surveys

A survey was sent out to each of the Parish Councils in the District, asking their views on current cultural provision in their parish. Just over 60 replied. A summary of the detailed responses can be found in Appendix 1.

The main points arising from the survey can be summarised as follows:

- The vast majority of the Parish Councils rate their community centres and village halls as “Excellent”, “Good” or “Average”. Only Shabbington and Edgcott rated these facilities as “poor”.
- The lack of adequate public transport was raised time and again.
- In general it was felt that there was poor local provision for teenagers.
- A number of parishes felt that future capital investment was needed into maintaining existing community facilities, rather than providing new ones.

6.4 Organisation Survey

A survey was sent to a list of some 600 local voluntary clubs, groups and organisations involved in sport and leisure in Aylesbury Vale. A total of 134 organisations returned the questionnaires, a response rate of just over 22% - a reasonable response for a survey of this nature.

Organisations were asked whether they were happy with their current position and, if not, what was needed to improve it. A list of options was given. They were then asked about their goals for future development, and again what was needed to help them achieve these goals.

When asked “Are you currently happy with the development of your club/organisation?” 57% replied “No” and 43% replied “Yes”. Those that answered “No” were then asked to give up to three main reasons for not being happy. Of those that responded 35% gave “lack of quality facilities”, 27% gave “lack of funding”, and 20% gave “too few members” as their main reason. For the second and third reasons (where completed) the only major addition to this list was “inadequate public awareness of your organisation”.

Organisations were then asked “What are your objectives for developing, maintaining your club/organisation/business over the next five years?” The two main responses given were: increasing membership or number of customers (20% of the respondents), and maintaining current facilities (26%). A further 20% of responses related in some way to improving or expanding facilities. When asked what would be the main factors to help them achieve their objectives, 28% replied that their priority would be “improved/new facilities for training/rehearsing/playing/performing”, a further 28% replied “more funding”, and 18% responded “increased members/users/participants”. Second priorities focussed on “greater awareness of funding opportunities” and “improved marketing”.

When responses were analysed by the *category* of organisation it became evident that arts organisations were significantly less satisfied with their current position than any other type of organisation. Their main reasons were lack of quality facilities and lack of funding.

6.5 Public Forums

As part of the consultation for the Cultural Strategy, a number of Cultural Forums were arranged throughout the district, and local cultural organisations and general members of the public invited to discuss local issues. Attendance at the Forums varied and therefore the opinions given should be regarded as qualitative rather than quantitative or representative.

6.5.1 Aylesbury Town

Attendees at the two Aylesbury Town forums felt that cultural provision in the Town was generally good with a range of facilities for sport, the arts, entertainment and eating out. Access to facilities in London and Milton Keynes also enhanced the Town as a place to live and work.

The growing Asian community in the Town was felt to increase the diversity of culture, but there was some concern expressed at the perceived lack of mixing between the different ethnic groups, a situation which it was felt could be improved through a wider range of community events.

There was considerable debate on the future provision of arts and performance spaces within the Aylesbury Town Centre and an emphasis on the important role both the Civic Centre and Queens Park Centre play in the delivery of cultural opportunities within the town. Views were expressed that any replacement facilities should offer enhanced performance and exhibition spaces at affordable costs to community groups.

Further discussion involved the need for more indoor sports hall space, more Junior playing pitches, all weather sporting facilities and better quality of pavilions.

6.5.2 Buckingham Town

The positive aspects of cultural provision in Buckingham were deemed to be the range of small concert venues such as Radcliffe Centre, the Chantry Chapel and the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul; provision for drama; the Old Gaol Museum and Tourist Information Centre; Stowe Gardens; the coach education scheme provided by the District Council; the “Streetlife” project for young people run by a charitable trust; and the new floodlit synthetic turf pitch.

Negative aspects mainly related to the success of local clubs such as the Buckingham Rugby, Tennis and Cricket Clubs as well as a number of junior football clubs which has led to the need for new or improved facilities; and the general infrastructure of Buckingham e.g. number of cafes, public toilet provision and coach drop off points. The lack of public transport from outlying areas into Buckingham was perceived as a major problem. Information on the availability of cultural activities was considered poor, as was co-ordination between cultural providers.

The Buckingham Vision Design Statement was seen as a positive example of how the culture of the built environment could be maintained and preserved and how the Cultural Strategy could influence wider community policies.

Future aspirations included the setting up of a Local Cultural Forum to facilitate co-ordination and cooperation between local cultural organisations, improved infrastructure and better public transport.

6.5.3 Steeple Claydon

The Steeple Claydon Forum identified strengths in the development of new leisure facilities in Aylesbury and Buckingham, a strong village sporting community, the local library, and National Trust properties.

From a negative perspective there was the lack of provision for young people in the village – seen as a key issues – particularly with the closure of the village youth club. Public transport, particularly to main events in the towns in the evening, was a key issue with strong support for initiatives such as the Winslow Community Bus Initiative. Interestingly, the forum had a fairly negative perception of Buckingham, citing retail decay, the absence of a cinema and car parking problems as barriers to visiting the town. There was a view that much cultural provision has been centralised and that more provision now needed to be made in the rural communities.

The Forum suggested the need for better information on local cultural activities was required.

6.5.4 Newton Longville

Newton Longville has an attractive new village hall. However, its design precludes indoor sports use and more flexible use of the overall space. The Forum felt the need for professional advice when planning such facilities in the future.

Much of the area looks to Milton Keynes for its cultural activity, and it was felt that most activities were catered for within a six mile radius, although the Swan Pool in Buckingham was seen to be more attractive than other swimming offerings in Milton Keynes.

Assistance with local provision and the continuance of voluntary clubs and professional advice for volunteers was seen to be a key priority.

6.5.5 Haddenham

The Haddenham Forums were keen to ensure that the village's local heritage and village atmosphere was maintained, particularly in view of proposed new housing and employment developments. The village is viewed as strong in terms of out of school and pre school clubs, a good and strong mix of sports clubs, and the Haddenham Players.

The forum was keen to ensure that any new housing developments integrated the new community created with the existing village, strengthening the economic centre of the village, rather than building new facilities within the housing developments.

The cultural needs of young people within village and small town communities were highlighted as a priority issue. With many community safety problems were being attributed to lack of relevant or accessible cultural opportunities.

6.6 Consultation with Neighbouring Local Authorities

Consultation took place with neighbouring local authorities on planned future developments within their areas that may have a bearing on future cultural provision in Aylesbury Vale. Collaborative working between councils ensures that resources are not duplicated and the most effective use of resources is achieved. Such collaborative working is already taking place for a number of initiatives such as joint open space management through the Greensand Trust with South Bedfordshire and the coach development initiatives and Buckinghamshire Tourism Marketing Initiative with the other authorities of Buckinghamshire.

In general most developments in neighbouring local authorities are locally based, although the new swimming pool at Thame, proposed sports hall at Princes Risborough, proposed facility improvements in Bicester and the potential development of a major stadium in Bletchley, will all contribute to increased cultural provision for certain areas of Aylesbury Vale.

6.7 Other Surveys

6.7.1 Crime and Disorder Survey

Under the Crime and Disorder Act, District Councils are required to produce a Community Safety Strategy in conjunction with the County Council and the Police. To facilitate this a major public consultation exercise was undertaken in 1998 to examine residents' attitudes and opinions across a wide range of issues. A postal survey was sent to 2,700 households in Aylesbury Vale, eliciting a 30% response rate.

Respondents were initially asked **how much of a problem they felt a number of issues were to them in the area where they live**, and to do so by indicating a number corresponding to the level of the problem, where 1 was not a problem at all and 10 was a major problem. From the results each issue was given a mean score. Of the thirteen issues identified the one with the highest mean score was "lack of leisure/recreational facilities for young people" (score of 5.63), followed by "availability of public transport" (score of 4.61).

Later in the survey the respondents were asked to rank in order, from the original list, the five issues which they felt *should be addressed as priorities*. Once again "lack of leisure/recreational facilities for young people" came top of the list, although "availability of public transport" slipped to 7th place.

6.7.2 Crime and Disorder – Survey of Young People

Also in 1998 a separate survey of young people was undertaken as part of the research into the Community Safety Strategy for Aylesbury Vale. A sample of just over 1,000 young people were questioned.

Amongst the questions asked was whether they visited certain places in their leisure time. Nearly 97% visited the Cinema “sometimes” or “often”, 76% visited a park, 77% visited a sports centre or club, and 34% visited a youth club.

When asked whether their town/village/area needed *more places for young people to go*, an overwhelming 78% said “Yes”.

6.7.3 Council Services Survey

In 2000 Aylesbury Vale District Council in partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council undertook a postal survey of a sample of 5,500 residents within the District picked at random from the Electoral Role. 1,617 surveys were returned.

The questionnaire asked a range of questions about County and District Council services, including usage and levels of satisfaction with sports and recreation facilities. With the exception of some specifically named facilities it would be difficult for general members of the public answering the survey to differentiate between County and District run leisure and cultural provision, or for that matter provision that might be run by another agency or organisation. The responses to the separate County and District questions must therefore be viewed with some caution, although overall they give an impression of levels of participation and satisfaction.

In general facilities had been used by over 50% of respondents at some time in the past 12 months, with libraries and parks receiving the highest level of regular use. Overall there was a significantly higher level of satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the cultural and leisure facilities provided.

6.7.4 Village Appraisals

Village Appraisals are surveys of an area carried out by the people who live or work there. It is a way of getting facts and opinions about the community from local people themselves and identifies what needs preserving and what needs improving or changing.

In Aylesbury Vale Village Appraisals are assisted by Buckinghamshire Community Action, and two appraisals have been undertaken within the District in 1997 for the villages of Ickford and Oakley. Whilst these should not be considered as representing the rural areas of Aylesbury Vale as a whole, they give a flavour of the importance of “cultural” activities to the life of the community, and the important role that groups such as the Women’s Institute, Senior Citizens Social Groups, and the Brownies play in addition to the more obvious cultural, sporting and leisure clubs. The role of the local pub to life within the rural community was also highlighted, as was the need for better public transport into and out of neighbouring towns and villages. However, as stated in the Oakley appraisal, “it was appreciated that these might not be commercially viable, and could with advantage be supplemented, perhaps by systematic arrangements for car-sharing or by a minibus funded by residents or by the Parish Council.”

The process of village appraisals should be further encouraged to identify local and regional needs and will assist villages or groups of villages to receive support through the Countryside Agencies Vital Villages initiative.

6.8 Consultations with Key Organisations and Officers

As part of the research for this Strategy meetings were held or contact made with a range of officers from the District and County Councils, District Councillors and representatives of local organisations and cultural providers. This list of contacts, whilst comprehensive, was by no means exhaustive, and this draft Strategy will provide the opportunity for many other individuals and organisations to influence the final document. Many of the views and comments given have been incorporated in earlier sections of the Strategy dealing with specific aspects of culture.

7 SETTING A VISION FOR AYLESBURY VALE

7.1 *Assessing Need – Summary of the Issues Arising from Consultation and Research*

There is much that Aylesbury Vale can be proud of in terms of its existing cultural provision. There is generally a good infrastructure of cultural facilities in key locations, provided by a wide variety of partners, and a range of notable initiatives to encourage participation and to achieve social, health and educational benefits. This Strategy needs to ensure that these positive achievements are sustained and built upon.

There are, however, issues arising from the above review of consultation and research, and this has highlighted a number of *key themes*. There are also a number of key policies identified within documents such as the district's Community Plan, Health Improvement Plan and Community Safety Strategy to which culture has an important contribution to make.

The key themes are:

- Providing the cultural, transport and economic infrastructure for the **growth** of Aylesbury Vale District;
- Access to cultural opportunities in the **rural areas**;
- The development of participation, and the celebration of excellence, in cultural activity by **young people** (and the benefits in terms of crime reduction, educational attainment and future healthy habits that this can bring);
- Maintaining, developing and celebrating the diverse **cultural identity and sense of place and history** of Aylesbury Vale;
- The lack of **equality of opportunity** in certain areas of the district and for certain groups.

7.2 A Vision for Culture in Aylesbury Vale

Based on these we need to establish a common purpose and vision for the future development of culture in Aylesbury Vale, to drive forward the initiatives and benefits that culture can bring. Below is a proposed vision statement that sets out the rationale and priorities for the development of culture over the next five years.

“We recognise the importance of culture in improving health, tackling social inclusion, developing skills throughout life, contributing to the economy, and developing an individual and community sense of worth and identity. Our vision for culture is that anyone living or working in Aylesbury Vale, irrespective of age, economic circumstance, race, gender, level of ability or geographical location is positively encouraged to, and has the opportunity to, participate in and enjoy culture at all levels in a way that helps preserve and sustain the local environment.

“We will do this by:

- *Ensuring the cultural infrastructure is developed to meet the needs of a growing district;*
- *Ensuring that people living in the rural areas of the district have access to a wide range of cultural activities and opportunities;*
- *Paying particular attention to the development of cultural opportunities for and participation by young people;*
- *Maintaining, developing and celebrating the diverse cultural identity and history of Aylesbury Vale;*
- *Ensuring a focus on those individuals and groups within the district who may be particularly disadvantaged in terms of accessing or affording cultural activities and opportunities.”*

The following recommendations are set out to achieve the vision and objectives for Aylesbury Vale, and address the key issues. Each issue is explored with key requirements identified. These are then summarised in Section 8 with clear actions, timeframes and partnership responsibilities set against each one.

7.3 The Growth of the District

7.3.1 Major Cultural Infrastructure

In general the residents of Aylesbury Vale are well serviced in terms of major cultural facilities and opportunities. This includes access to provision outside of the district for certain areas of the district e.g. to Milton Keynes and London. However, the residents’ survey shows that many residents of the district look to Aylesbury Town for major cultural provision, such as the cinema and entertainment, and this is likely to increase with the proposed country park, new sporting and fitness developments at the Aqua Vale and the Guttman Leisure Centre. With the expansion of the Town through new residential development, and attraction of new businesses to the area, the gaps in major infrastructure provision need to be addressed. These are:

- The lack of a central **Arts Centre** with display and flexible and affordable arts performance space is a significant omission in a town the size of Aylesbury, particularly in view of its future growth. This situation needs to be remedied.

- The recently developed entertainments area in the centre of the town, with the cinema and the range of restaurants and bars has a strong focus on the younger, under 25 year old market. There are limited areas where the significant number of office workers in the central area of Aylesbury can go at lunch time or after work that offers a more varied choice of eating and drinking establishments, and for the older age groups in the evening. It is provision for the full spectrum of residents and workers that will enable the development of a vibrant evening economy and assist in attracting inward investment and new businesses to the district.

The developing “leisure corridor” in Aylesbury offers the opportunity to address both these issues.

It is recommended that the proposed redevelopment of the Exchange Street/Canal Basin site includes provision for a new Aylesbury Arts Centre which meets the need of a growing population and specifically encourages the attraction of a mix of leisure, restaurants and café/bars that extends the existing provision to a wider market.

It is recommended that local authorities work in partnership to encourage greater community access to school, educational, military and private club facilities.

7.3.2 Community Infrastructure in Growth Areas

The residential developments that will take place in Aylesbury Town, Buckingham, and some of the larger villages, will bring with them not only an increased population, but an additional demand for cultural facilities and services. In Aylesbury some of this demand will be met by the continued development of the major cultural infrastructure within the town.

However, at a more local level in Aylesbury, Buckingham, and the larger villages the additional population will generate a need for open space, play facilities, multi purpose community centres and indoor sports facilities. If these facilities are simply provided within the new residential developments there is the potential for these developments to become self-contained and independent mini-communities, with little integration into the surrounding neighbourhoods and communities.

It is therefore recommended that the preparation of the Planning Briefs for the new residential developments should take account of existing local cultural facilities, and *where practical and appropriate*, and as an initial priority, should extend and improve existing provision to cater for the needs of new residents rather than create new independent cultural infrastructures.

Clearly in preparing the Planning Briefs, account must be taken of the accessibility of existing provision and the standards that need to be applied.

7.3.3 Integration of Growth Areas

Culturally the integration of new developments into the community and heritage of the area into which they are being located is crucial for the future identity and sense of community in the area.

In the past housing development has not always reflected the history and character of the area in which it has been built. For instance, too often both the names of the

developments and the street names in new developments bear no relation to the heritage of the area in which they have been located. The draft Local Plan sets out to address this through requiring new developments to respect and reinforce local distinctiveness. **The cultural Strategy supports these policies and any further work that can be undertaken to facilitate this through the preparation and adoption of appropriate supplementary planning guidance that sets out clearly the minimum acceptable level of design and materials for each development area.**

It is also recommended that new developments promote the heritage of the area in which they are being built through the development and maintenance of existing historical or heritage features, and the interpretation of local history.

7.4 Access to Cultural Opportunities in Rural Areas

Access to cultural opportunities, whether they are facilities or activities, is often more difficult in rural areas, where the size of population makes it difficult to justify the provision of major cultural facilities (swimming pools, cinemas etc.), and particularly for those groups, such as the elderly and the young, who may not have their own private transport to access opportunities elsewhere.

Much has been said about the need to improve or develop public transport from the rural areas to access cultural opportunities elsewhere in the district. However, it must be realised that *frequency* of participation in cultural activities is one of the most important factors in achieving the benefits that culture can bring. A work out in the gym once a fortnight will not significantly contribute to health improvement, nor will a one off drama or sports course for young people in a local village necessarily improve skills or reduce vandalism for the rest of the year. Whilst improved transport links from the rural areas to the main towns may promote higher levels of participation in specialist or “day out” activities, it is unlikely to encourage the less dedicated participant to spend a half hour in the gym or at an arts class if it is sandwiched by two three quarter hour bus rides. There are therefore two levels at which to consider access to cultural opportunities for those living within the rural areas of Aylesbury Vale.

1. Provision of public transport from the rural areas to the main cultural destinations for “nights out” or specialist activities.

The main destinations will vary according to the location of the village. For instance, whilst for much of Aylesbury Vale, Aylesbury itself or Buckingham would be the destination, to the north of the district Milton Keynes may be the preferred place. To facilitate this would therefore mean working with a range of providers and across local authority boundaries.

It is recommended that as an initial priority a pilot transport scheme is developed with appropriate partners that provides access to and from key cultural locations with a focus on provision for young people, aiming at providing a service in the evenings, perhaps initially for Fridays and the weekends.

2. Local Cultural Provision

It is essential to have relatively local provision and programmes for outcomes (e.g. improved health and fitness, arts or crafts skill development) that require

regular participation. The policies set out in the SAVE Strategy also promote readily available cultural, leisure and social activities.

It is therefore recommended that within the five year life of the strategy everyone living in or working in Aylesbury Vale will be able to access a range of locally (within a maximum 15 minute travel time) based participative cultural activities.

To do so requires three key elements:

- *Facilities* – a minimum basic provision of facility will be required for indoor and outdoor activity. In many cases a community hall or village hall will suffice for a basic range of activities, although enhancements or improvements may be required for some activities. The parish and organisations surveys have not highlighted the need for many new facilities, but for investment in maintaining and upgrading the existing ones.
- *Activities* – facilities are only the venue within which a programme of activities takes place. If, for instance, there are not specific programmes for young people, parents, particular ethnic groups, older members of the community, then they will not participate and the benefits had they done so will be lost. These activities should in general not be “one-offs” but capable of being sustained or self-sustaining over the year. It would be more valuable to focus resources on the development of a limited number of key cultural activities until they become sustainable, rather than run a wide range of “taster” or “introductory” programmes that then cease to operate.
- *Coaches/teachers* – Activities cannot be programmed without people to organise and teach them. Whilst many of these people may be professionally employed by district or other agencies many may be local people or volunteers. Ultimately these people will be an important part of the ongoing sustainability of the activities, and a systematic programme of coaches/teacher/organiser development needs to be developed with education establishments to ensure the future sustainability of programmes.

Responsibility for providing and developing facilities, activities and coach/teacher education does and cannot fall to a single body, but needs to be through a partnership of district, parish and county councils, learning skills council, health for all group, police, county, regional and other statutory agencies, local communities themselves, and voluntary and commercial organisations. The provision of local cultural activities may be for their own sake or as part of a wider agenda e.g. health improvement, community safety. The mix of partners will depend on the particular challenges facing them in each area of the District.

It is beyond the scope of this strategy to propose solutions and actions for each of the 109 parishes within the district. These need to be determined locally, and priorities for action will in any case change over the life of the strategy. However, as general policy:

It is recommended that:

- **The key agencies identify the rural areas of the district where priority in terms of the development of cultural and cross-cutting activities is most needed using a pre-determined set of criteria e.g. lack of facilities, minimal cultural activity, more than 15 minutes travel from a town or village that offers a wide range of cultural choice;**
- **Working in partnership with the parish councils and relevant locally based organisations, identify and plan any future facility infrastructure development or improvements required;**
- **Where practical, and where there is a joint willingness to do so, investigate the viability of specific villages and parishes working together to provide complementary programmes and facilities, supported by local transport initiatives;**
- **Develop and monitor with partners an ongoing and sustainable programme of cultural opportunities for the relevant village, parish or “cluster”, building on existing successful initiatives where appropriate.**
- **The importance of volunteers in the delivery of cultural opportunities is recognised through ongoing and practical support for agencies and networks supporting these individuals.**

There are some practical examples of “cluster” or partnership working between parishes already established in Aylesbury Vale. Two of these are given below:

Football

A small youth team was started in the village of Preston Bissett approximately 10 years ago, after a couple of years the team moved to the neighbouring village of Gawcott which boasted a new sports pavilion and wider use of pitches. The new club Preston & Gawcott Boys is now one of the most successful youth sports organisations in the area running 18 teams at all ages between under 7 and under 17 and attracting players from all around the Buckingham area.

Play

Two play schemes at neighbouring villages Edlesborough and Dagnall had been struggling for a number of years. In 2000 it was decided to combine the schemes and move to the one centre in Dagnall. The resulting scheme combined the skills of the play leaders for both groups, attracted a greater number of participants and allowed concentrated support from the Aylesbury Vale Play Association.

It is also important, however, that the needs of those rural areas *not* initially identified as priority areas continue to be considered, and help is given to these areas to facilitate the development of cultural opportunities, and identify potential sources of funding for future facility maintenance and improvements.

7.5 Development of Cultural Participation by Young People

The involvement of young people in cultural activity at an early stage of their development has been highlighted in the various strategies as an important component of health improvement and community safety, and is one of the major priorities identified by district council residents by the residents' survey.

It is therefore recommended that:

- **A key priority in the development of cultural activity and participation should be young people, and programming of activities and support for voluntary and other organisations delivering cultural opportunities should directly encourage provision for young people;**
- **Where practical the key agencies and organisations involved in cultural provision should work in partnership to develop programmes that will meet the goals and priorities of the Community Plan, Health Improvement Plan and Community Safety Plan in relation to young people.**

7.6 Cultural Identity and Heritage

Creating a sense of identity and community for people moving into the new residential developments has been highlighted earlier with the need - to quote the district's Community Plan's proposed five year objectives - to "encourage the development of communities rather than housing estates."

However, of equal importance is the development and maintenance of a sense of identity amongst *existing* communities. The communities of Aylesbury Vale are varied and distinctive, ranging from the rural areas to a wide mix of ethnic groups. This diversity should be celebrated and form part of an overall sense of community. However, this sense of community varies across the district. The Residents' Survey identified that the rural communities had the strongest sense of local identity; Buckingham residents were concerned that they were beginning to lose their sense of a "close knit community"; and Aylesbury residents felt that a sense of community identity did not exist. There are therefore issues about both *preserving* the identities that exist in the rural areas and Buckingham, and addressing the lack of identity expressed by residents in Aylesbury Town.

One of the best ways of engaging local people in their communities and expressing local distinctiveness is through local events such as carnivals, fetes, competitions, processions, and entertainments. These can provide a focal point for communities, both in terms of those engaged in their planning and preparation and those who more passively enjoy the end result.

It is recommended that a year round programme of community events is planned and developed over the five year life of the Strategy, that will promote the variety and distinctiveness of Aylesbury Vale, and be delivered through local partnerships, with adequate funding being identified.

In addition the sense of place and community needs to be reinforced through the overt interpretation of the district's history and heritage. The main population centres of the district have a long history, but there is little if any description or explanation of it available to people walking through the main centres, and much of the sense of place

and heritage in Aylesbury, for instance, has been overshadowed by debatable planning or design decisions taken by previous generations.

It is recommended that proposals for the sensitive public interpretation of the heritage and history of Aylesbury Vale are developed and implemented within the period of this Strategy.

Cultural identity and creativity also need to be expressed through public art and the design of new buildings and landmark facilities. Within the guidelines that respect the need for architecture to reflect local distinctiveness there needs to be flexibility to encourage innovation and flair, excellence in design not mediocrity.

It is recommended that:

- **Innovative architectural talent is encouraged, where possible, through the planning process to design the district's landmark buildings and developments.**
- **A Percent for the Arts policy is adopted for new developments within the district to provide a varied range of art in public places.**

7.7 Equality and Opportunity

This Strategy has highlighted specific geographical areas (the rural communities), and a target group (young people) where particular focus for the development of cultural participation should be placed. However, in addition to these there are other geographical areas (the wards in Aylesbury where deprivation indices indicate particular inequalities) and other groups (the elderly, disabled, Asian women) that have been identified in concurrent strategies, where involvement in cultural activity can bring specific benefits in terms of improved health, social interaction, and quality of life.

It is recommended that the agencies and organisations involved in cultural provision ensure there are a range of ongoing programmes and activities targeted at identified groups and wards to encourage and develop participation in cultural activity, working as appropriate with other providers to implement such programmes.

Equality and opportunity issues are also affected by access to information on cultural activities – whether in urban or rural areas. One of the greatest barriers to participation in cultural activity is lack of awareness of the opportunities available and the perception that such opportunities are not for “them”. People often have to be proactive to seek out such information, and this is made harder by the fact that there is rarely a single “source” of information on the opportunities being made available by *all* providers. In general people are not concerned whether it is the local council, a private operator, or a local entrepreneur who is running, for instance, an aerobic class. Their main concerns will be how convenient the location is, their perception of the facility the class is being held in, and the price being charged.

There is no easy solution, but full use of new IT developments, web sites, TICs, libraries, parish noticeboards etc. needs to be made in a *co-ordinated* way between the organisations involved.

It is recommended that the Council facilitates the development of a co-ordinated marketing strategy, utilising new media as well as more traditional routes, that works towards the creation and promotion of a comprehensive information system on cultural opportunities. This should include specific strategies to attract “hard to reach” groups and target groups within the district.

8 SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN

This Strategy has examined the importance and impact of culture at a national and local level; not only as activity in its own right but as a significant contributor to the wider agendas of health improvement, community safety, social inclusion, community and individual identity. Much is already being done in Aylesbury Vale, and the partners involved can be proud of their achievements. But this is a beginning, and there are issues that need to be addressed for the district to realise the full benefits and potential of culture. These issues include arriving at a common vision, co-ordinating resources, and investment of resources (both capital and revenue). They include using culture to tackle the health, economic development and social issues facing Aylesbury Vale. Most importantly they involve building for the future – not just in terms of improved and additional facilities – but in terms of creating a sense of community and local identity in a growing district, and focussing firmly on creating life long participation in culture through developing participation and interest as an habit at an early age.

The objectives and actions required to progress this have been discussed in the previous section, and are set out in the attached table, together with timescales for achievement. From these the District Council and its partners will develop detailed annual service specific plans that progress the achievement of the Strategy’s goals.

There will be many partnerships that need to be created for the development of culture in the district, and many of these will emerge as the process of implementing the recommendations in this Strategy is set in motion. However, **it is recommended that an Aylesbury Vale Cultural Steering Group is established, comprising representatives of the key public, private and voluntary agencies and organisations involved in culture and the areas that culture can influence, to guide and oversee the development and implementation of this Strategy.**

The District Council has a key role in working with its many partners through such a Group to move this strategy forward. By doing so it will significantly improve the quality of life of the many people and communities of Aylesbury Vale.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To ensure the cultural infrastructure is developed to meet the needs of a growing district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a detailed feasibility into the creation and content of a new Arts Centre to be sited on the Exchange Street/Canal Basin site in Aylesbury Ensure the development of the Exchange Street/Canal Basin site contains a mix of leisure uses that extends the existing leisure provision in Aylesbury to a wider market Support the development of new country park for the Aylesbury area. Undertake an audit of the size, condition and facilities of existing community cultural provision adjacent to proposed new residential developments 	<p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p>	<p>BCC, AV Arts Council, Queens Park Centre, Aylesbury Town Council</p> <p>British Waterways, Private Developers, Aylesbury Society, Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership, Aylesbury Canal Society</p> <p>BCC Development Consortiums</p> <p>BCC, Development Consortiums, Community matters, Community Groups, Education Establishments</p>	<p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002/2003</p> <p>2002/2004</p> <p>2002/2004</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To ensure the cultural infrastructure is developed to meet the needs of a growing district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify from the audit existing cultural provision that can be enhanced and expanded to meet the needs of existing and new communities and ensure the Planning Briefs for the residential developments reflect this • Ensure that maximum levels of 106 funding is secured and provided for projects identified by the community • Develop and adopt supplementary planning guidance that sets out clearly the minimum acceptable level of design and materials for each development area. • Ensure that such guidance includes clear guidelines on protecting, interpreting and promoting the environment and heritage of the area in which the developments are taking place • Promote applications for Community Arts & Sports Colleges within the Vale 	<p>AVDC</p>	<p>BCA, Town & Parish Councils</p>	<p>2002-2007</p>
<p>To ensure that people living in the rural areas of the district have access to a wide range of cultural activities and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research a pilot transport scheme from rural areas to provide access to and from key cultural locations, with a particular focus on provision for young people • Implement the pilot transport scheme 	<p>AVDC Planners</p> <p>AVDC Planners</p> <p>Bucks CC</p> <p>Bucks Community Action</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>AVDC Leisure & Legal Depts.</p> <p>AVDC Leisure</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC, Bucks CC, Arriva, Parish Councils</p>	<p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2002</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2004</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To ensure that people living in the rural areas of the district have access to a wide range of cultural activities and opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review effectiveness of the pilot and set out future development proposals Encourage parishes to undertake Village Appraisals and participate in Vital Villages Initiative Key agencies involved in rural provision identify those areas of the district where priority should be given for the development of cultural and cross cutting activities Develop specific action plans for the priority areas identifying facility and programming requirements, funding and volunteer support Implement action plans Investigate the willingness of specific villages and parishes to work together to provide complementary programmes and facilities, supported by local transport initiatives Facilitate the development of such partnerships and the implementation of actions to meet local needs Encourage Development of Footpath, Cycle & Waterway Network across Aylesbury Vale taking into consideration the wider environmental impact of these developments. Support village event organisers and co-ordinators through ongoing programme of training 	<p>Countryside Commission</p> <p>Bucks Community Action</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Bucks CC</p> <p>AVDC</p>	<p>BCA, AVDC, Bucks CC Parish Councils</p> <p>AVDC, Bucks CC, Arriva, Parish Councils, Police</p> <p>AVDC, BCC, Parishes</p> <p>Sustrans, British Waterways SAVE Arts Council, Parishes, community groups</p>	<p>2002-2005</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2003-2007 2002-2004</p> <p>2004-2007</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2007</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To pay particular attention to the development of cultural opportunities for, and participation by, young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure cultural agencies work in partnership with other organisations to develop programmes that will meet the goals and priorities of the Community Plan, Health Improvement Plan and Community Safety Plan in relation to young people. • Develop a youth strategy to address the needs of all young people across the district, taking into account the “above” initiatives, • Implement young people’s strategy actions • Support development of local youth forums and work of UK Youth Parliament. • Encourage development of Action Sport Programme throughout the Vale 	<p>Bucks CC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>Bucks CC Thames Valley Police</p> <p>Sport England</p>	<p>AVDC Aylesbury Vale PCT, Thames Valley Police</p> <p>Bucks CC Aylesbury Vale PCT, Thames Valley Police</p> <p>AVDC Community Groups,</p> <p>AVDC, Bucks CC District Councils, Governing Bodies</p>	<p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2003-2007</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2005</p>
<p>To maintain, develop and celebrate the diverse cultural identity and history of Aylesbury Vale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a cross-agency/community events working group • Prepare a plan for the development and co-ordination of year round community events that promote the variety and distinctiveness of Aylesbury Vale • Implement the plan 	<p>AVDC</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Bucks CC, BCA, National Trust Town Partnerships</p>	<p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2007</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To maintain, develop and celebrate the diverse cultural identity and history of Aylesbury Vale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare proposals and funding options for the sensitive public interpretation of the history and heritage of Aylesbury Vale • Proactively seek innovative architectural talent to design the district's landmark buildings and developments • Develop greater networking programme for visitor facilities and services across the Vale. • Support the implementation of the Buckinghamshire Tourism Marketing Initiative • Deliver targets set within the Aylesbury Vale Biodiversity Action Plan • Develop and adopt a formal "percentage for the Arts" planning policy • Develop the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's past" initiative to provide internet access to archaeological records within the county. 	<p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>Bucks CC</p>	<p>Town Partnerships, Bucks CC, Parish Councils</p> <p>Regional Tourist Board, Visitor Attractions, Accommodation Providers</p> <p>Countryside Commission, Environment Agency, Landowners</p> <p>Bucks CC, Development Agencies</p> <p>Heritage Societies</p> <p>AVDC</p>	<p>2003-2005</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2004</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2002-2003</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
<p>To ensure a focus on those individuals and groups within the district who may be particularly disadvantaged in terms of accessing or affording cultural activities and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop action plans to provide cultural activities targeted at: wards with high deprivation indices, the elderly, people with disabilities, Asian women, in order to improve health and quality of life • Support development of Healthy Living Centres in target areas of district • Implement plans as part of wider cross agency programmes • Review concessionary pricing policy for major cultural facilities within the Vale including Aqua Vale, Swan Pool & Civic Centre • Prepare and cost a co-ordinated 5 year marketing plan for effective promotion of cultural opportunities within Aylesbury Vale, working with all key agencies. • Implement the marketing action plan. 	<p>AVDC</p> <p>Aylesbury Vale Primary Care Trust</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p> <p>AVDC</p>	<p>AVREC, Community Matters Bucks, Bucks CC, Bucks CA</p> <p>AVDC, Bucks CC, Community Groups</p> <p>Serco</p> <p>Bucks Private Partners.</p> <p>CC,</p>	<p>2002-2004</p> <p>2002-2007</p> <p>2004-2007</p> <p>2003-2004</p> <p>2002-2003</p> <p>2002-2007</p>



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