

# Cabinet Report

Report of Head of Policy and Programmes

Author: Jayne Bolton

Telephone: 07717 271911

E-mail: [Jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:Jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk)

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Councillor Helen Pighills

Tel: 01235 534446

E-mail: [helen.pighills@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:helen.pighills@whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

To: CABINET

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## Active Communities Strategy

### Recommendation

To approve the Active Communities Strategy attached at appendix one.

### Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet's approval of the Active Communities Strategy to support the wellbeing of Vale of White Horse's communities.

### Corporate Objectives

2. This strategy contributes to the following corporate priorities:
  - We will build strong communities and connections with a sense of place and strong community identity.
  - We will promote healthy place shaping and active communities, for everyone by:
    - Producing an Active Communities strategy; setting out how the council will work with our communities and partners and enable everyone to participate in physical activities.
    - Work with Active Oxfordshire to target individual projects in our most deprived communities.
    - Commit resources to identify more third-party income, including government and other grants, to help pay for our services.

- Promote use of the council's public green spaces for exercise and activity. Identify council owned land for community gardening and allotments projects.
- Active engagement with the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the Vale has strong representation in countywide health forums.

## **Background**

3. The Active Communities Strategy will sit beneath the overarching Healthy Communities Strategy as just one in a suite of supporting strategies, such as the Leisure Facilities Strategy and the Arts Development Strategy, and addresses many of the wellbeing and health related priorities of the council's Corporate Plan's. The strategy sets out how the Council plans to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and the key role the council plays in providing high quality active opportunities for communities, alongside its partners.

## **Considerations**

4. Approval of this strategy will enable the council to target resources, to improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of Vale of White Horse's communities, at a time when it has never been more important following the detrimental effects of the pandemic on residents' wellbeing on all levels.
5. The proposed vision for the strategy is to 'Be Active, Be Healthy, Be Happy' and the key aims are to:
  - To make our districts a better place to live by enabling communities to improve the quality of their own lives and encourage local initiatives that make a real difference.
  - To focus on partnership working to increase the range and awareness of opportunities available across the districts for residents to take part in. We will utilise resources for maximum benefit, ensuring value for money in all that we do.
  - To reduce inactivity and minimise the impact that may be caused by health inequalities within our communities by offering support that is accessible for everyone
6. To meet these key aims six themes are included in the delivery plan; these are:
  - i. enabling everyone to be active
  - ii. create healthier communities through walking and cycling
  - iii. maximise the potential of our natural environment
  - iv. building the skills base of our communities
  - v. effective communication, promotion and consultation
  - vi. collaborative partnerships and funding advice

## **Climate and ecological impact implications**

7. The promotion of more active travel opportunities and making better use of our natural resources and open green spaces will have a positive impact on the climate change agenda.

## **Financial Implications**

8. Implementation of the strategy will, in the first instance, be covered by existing resources within the active communities team but future consideration will need to be given to the emerging delivery plan to prioritise resources. Currently external funding assists to cover activities in the short term, and the intention is to seek additional external funding in the future by working jointly with partners.
9. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan as reported to Full Council in February 2022 showed that the council was able to set a balanced budget for 2022/23, but that there is expected to be a budget gap in future years.
10. This future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £3.7 million by 2026/27. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisant of the need to address this funding gap in future years.

## **Legal Implications**

11. Supporting the Active Communities Strategy neither imposes nor infers any additional obligations on the council, and it is therefore considered that there are no legal implications.

## **Risks**

12. The only risk considered pertinent to supporting the draft strategy would be a reputational one amongst partner organisations if we were not to deliver a range of interventions that improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, particularly countywide funded projects delivered in partnership.

## **Other implications**

13. There are not considered to be any other implications.

## **Conclusion**

14. That Cabinet notes the approach being proposed to meet several corporate objectives and agrees to approve the Active Communities Strategy.