TITLE   **Shaping Our New Communities Strategy**

FOR CONSIDERATION BY   Health and Wellbeing Board on 14 August 2014

WARD   None Specific

SHAPING OUR NEW COMMUNITIES

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD BRIEFING

14 AUGUST 2014

Introduction

Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy 2010 set out a vision for how the borough should develop in the period to 2026 and how the council aims to protect and enhance the good quality of life enjoyed in the borough. The strategy was the result of extensive consultation. A key message from the community was that development should be concentrated in a few locations in order to:

- protect the character of the existing residential areas
- ensure the resulting communities would be of high quality and infrastructure rich

The Core Strategy identifies the four Strategic Development Locations (SDL) which will accommodate the majority of the 13,000 new homes to be built across the borough. In addition to homes, these areas will also provide the infrastructure required to support and make a success of these new developments, and offset their impact on existing local communities, in order to protect and enhance the good quality of life enjoyed in the borough.

The Shaping Our New Communities (SONC) document sets out recommendations for the softer aspects of this infrastructure provision, in the national context of the Localism and Health and Wellbeing agendas, and Wokingham Borough's own Vision. By drawing on learning from New Towns and Garden Cities of the early to mid-twentieth Century, more recent large scale developments both locally and nationally, and local stakeholder consultation, it considers how best to enable our new communities to develop seamlessly alongside existing settlements as planning applications materialise into new homes, the types of community facilities required to support these, and how these facilities may be managed.

Aims

SONC seeks to formalise Wokingham Borough Council's position on how we:

1. continue to engage with the community in the planning stages of the four SDL communities;
2. support community development within SDLs and their integration with neighbouring communities;
3. provide the right community facilities for the new SDL neighbourhoods, with a particular emphasis on proposed multi-use Community Centres;
4. develop options for future management of these facilities

These aims and their implications are summarised in the table at the end of this briefing.

Whilst the emphasis is focussed on and around our four SDL communities, it is recognised that this work sets a potential precedent for future ways of working with our changing communities across the wider Borough.

Key Themes

Prevention: The benefits of proposals within SONC to support the speedy establishment of social infrastructure, or the social networks that help to form the "glue" of a successful community, fit primarily with the prevention agenda. Research has suggested that the "New Town Blues" phenomena that resulted in social isolation and deteriorating mental health for some New Town inhabitants was attributable to a lack of social networks, rather than simply delays in or under-provision of infrastructure. However, the importance of physical infrastructure such as shared public facilities, spaces and community meeting places also came out strongly in our research as essential to supporting the establishment of these networks.

These findings support proposals for
- the involvement of wider community stakeholders in shaping the new developments,
- the provision of support for community development and integration activities to kick start the development of social networks, across new and existing parts of the developments
- support for community and voluntary sector
- the provision of flexible community meeting spaces that can adapt to meet a range of community needs as they evolve

This has the potential benefit of saving the public purse in the longer term by preventing the escalation of social issues such as:
- anti-social behaviour and crime,
- mental health and its related impact on individual and family support needs (vulnerable adults and children)
- general deterioration of social and economic prosperity

Management of Community Assets: Local consultation feedback indicated a preference for the community to have influence over the management of new facilities, and a disinclination for Wokingham Borough Council or a private company to manage them. This fits well alongside the emerging policy framework on assets and service delivery.

SONC sets out a range of management options which have been implemented elsewhere in the country, ranging from Parish or Community Councils, community associations and development trusts, to private (for-profit) companies, and within this there are a broad range of options for community management models.

Consultation

A public consultation on the aims and aspirations of SONC is being conducted between 8 August and 17 October 2014. Details of the consultation can be found on the Wokingham Borough Council website at www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultation

Shaping Our New Communities: 2014 to 2026

Help create strong, sustainable new Strategic Development Location (SDL) communities that are vibrant and well integrated with surrounding towns and villages

	Involve the community in discussions about SDL development	Support creation of thriving, community facilities that can sustain themselves in the long term	Help make the new communities strong, vibrant and well-integrated with the rest of the borough	Find the best ways to run community assets for the benefit of local people in the long term
In the next 3 years we will:	• Link consultation and engagement work with SDL and Community Forums Communications Plan • Provide on-going support to SDL Parish and Community Forums • Increase understanding of local people's aspiration and need • Support Neighbourhood Planning	• Be able to prove need for Community facilities • Learn from similar developments in UK and further afield • Ensure that facilities provided work for local people and can sustain themselves financially	• Ensure a plan is in place to resource community development support in each SDL area from first build phases • Support new communities in engaging with their new built, social, and cultural environments • Work with Voluntary and Community Sector groups to expand services to support new communities	• Work with local people and organisations to find the best option for each SDL area • Support development of local groups that are able to run community assets
We will have Succeeded if, by 2015:	• People feel positively about the opportunities to get involved • SDL development reflects aspirations of Neighbourhood Plans	• Funding has been secured for good quality community facilities • Community facilities are well used and financially viable	• New residents feel positively about their new community and feel welcomed and supported • Community facilities are being well used and there is local cultural and social activity • Voluntary sector is active within new communities and residents are aware of services and opportunities to contribute	• The Community facilities are being managed in the community's best interest, or a robust plan is in place for this to happen • Community led groups are establishing with an interest in managing community assets