

7 September 2023

**South and Vale Active Communities Strategy**

**Purpose / Recommendation**

1. The Health Improvement Board is asked to note the opportunities provided by South and Vale to support residents in becoming and remaining active outlined in their Active Communities Strategy.

**Background**

2. The South and Vale Active Communities strategy supports the wellbeing of our residents, promotes keeping healthy and addresses inequalities and aligns with the priorities of the Health Improvement Board.

A joint Active Communities Strategy was approved by both South and Vale Cabinets in summer 2022. The strategy sets out how the Councils' plan to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and the key role we play in providing high quality active opportunities for our communities, to contribute to tackling inactivity and addressing the inequalities that challenge our society.

**The Vision** is for all our residents to **'be active, be healthy and be happy.'**

The focus of this strategy is sustainability, supporting and encouraging people to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing and enabling community organisations to work together to improve health and wellbeing at a very local level.

We aim 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.

The strategy has six themes:

- enabling everyone to be active – ensure sustainable, inclusive, local interventions to support residents to keep healthy.
- create healthier communities through walking and cycling - increase opportunities to walk and cycle safely using local infrastructure footpaths and cycleways across our district.
- maximise the potential of our natural environment - use natural infrastructure to provide a place for physical activity, relaxation, social interaction, and community events.
- building the skills base of our communities - working with the local workforce to make it sustainable. Our coaches, instructors and volunteers will be recruited, developed, and supported along their desired pathway.
- effective communication, promotion and consultation - engage with our communities to get a true picture of what active opportunity is available locally.
- collaborative partnerships and funding advice – making resources go further and sharing best practice.

## Key Issues

3. The Active Communities team currently work on a variety of projects, which include the Oxfordshire Wide Schemes Move Together and You Move. Move Together is a scheme to support people to move more, to help improve physical and mental health, reduce social isolation and support people with long term health conditions. You Move is aimed at children on benefits related free school meals, young carers, refugees and other vulnerable children and their families. The pathway helps families to become more active by providing free and low-cost opportunities.

All five district councils across Oxfordshire delivered a variety of activities to support families throughout the summer, including many free activities for participants on the You Move pathway.

- **Holiday activities**

In South and Vale, the Active Communities team have worked with a number of partners, both internally and externally to deliver this year's programme, including the Didcot Garden Town team, Arts Development and the Community Safety team.

Partnerships with Oxfordshire Cricket Board, YMCA, town and parish councils, Oxfordshire Play Association, ATB Skate and Scoot, Team Rubicon, Manor Preparatory School in Abingdon, the Fitness and Wellbeing Hub, Active Totz, local libraries and local youth groups enabled us to offer a wide variety of activities for the community to get involved with.

This summer, the team have delivered a full programme with over 100 sessions taking place in a variety of sports from cricket, football and table tennis, to dance, yoga, and skateboarding, as well as walks, family boot camps and fun days, ensuring there was something for everyone to enjoy. Didcot Garden Town funded 38 activity sessions in Didcot, Blewbury, Milton and Sutton Courtenay for people of all ages, as part of their Didcot Garden Party.

Active Communities partnered with Community Safety to deliver the summer of skate with 17 skateboarding events running across the two districts. The sessions were run by ATB Skate and Scoot, to offer skating and scooting games and competitions, and Team Rubicon for the beginners skateboarding sessions for all ages.

- In addition to the partnership events, the team also ran regular Xplorer orienteering events which are family friendly fun navigation challenges suitable for all ages and some Real Play sessions which encourage parent/carer and child interaction through physical activity.
- **Outdoor table tennis**

The Active Communities team have secured funding which has enabled them to provide 21 table tennis tables across the two districts since March 2021. The table tennis project was originally supported by Table Tennis England as they provided match funding, and more recently offered both indoor and outdoor tables at a discounted rate. Since summer 2022, 11 tables have been put in local parks and outdoor areas and we have four more due to go in later this year. At each site, the team offer a launch event to encourage community use through games and mini competitions and hand out free bats and balls to encourage use. There are QR codes for the tables to monitor use and evidence the wider impact the tables have had. Feedback has been positive with residents saying they use the table regularly and this project has given them opportunities they didn't have before.
- **Partnerships with local organisations**

Working with the Fitness and Wellbeing Hub in Didcot we were able to offer family fitness classes at weekends throughout the summer. This supported working parents to be able to take part in activities with their children. The team delivered Boxfit sessions for teenagers at TRAIN (in Didcot) and Sweatbox (in Wantage), two local youth groups. The team teamed up with Active Totz who ran sessions in village locations such as Steventon and Wootton for the under-fives. We linked up with libraries in Abingdon and Didcot too as part of the Summer Reading Challenge. The sessions included story-based activities around a children's book. In Didcot the session was based on stories including The Gruffalo and in Abingdon included Walk on the Wild Side amongst others. The 45-minute sessions were aimed at four to eight year olds, with You Move families having priority booking status. Nature days were run at the Manor Preparatory School in Abingdon. The school invited the team to use their facilities to offer local children a fun filled day which was well received by the 55 children who attended the day with their parents. This event received this feedback:

*"I attended your family fun day today at the Manor Prep in Abingdon and just wanted to pass on my thanks to the team.*

*It was brilliantly run, plenty of activities going on and lots of support from the staff. I was really impressed.*

*It's not very often I send an email after an event to compliment the project, but this was really good - a very relaxed environment for the parents and a lot of fun for all ages. Please do pass on my thanks to the whole team - a great day was had by everyone!"*

- **Ride Revolution**

Ride Revolution takes unwanted bikes that have been donated and restores them so that they can be used by others who need them. We work alongside a number of partner organisations in Oxfordshire to support children and families who may not have access to a bike and will provide them with the safety equipment and free cycling tuition where needed.

As well as helping residents to keep active the project also gives them the knowledge and confidence to ride safely and keep their bike in good working order.

Local business, Pedal Power in Abingdon, are supporting us by providing discounted locks, lights and helmets for riders that don't have them.

Two storage containers have been purchased to accommodate the donated bikes while waiting for them to be refurbished. Partnering with the Arts development team, local artists and youngsters have painted a mural on the Ride Revolution storage containers to make them look more attractive.

Interested local residents also joined in with the mural painting.

- **Nature Trails**

Nature Trails provide a fun and informative way to get people active and exploring the natural world on their doorstep. These walks are being piloted in South Abingdon and Didcot.

These walks seek to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the local community and those undertaking these walks.

Along the walks there will be sites to encourage play and activity for younger children and those young at heart, there will also be information scattered throughout the walks about the local wildlife and nature as well as the history of the area.

Maps and walks around the areas will also play host to numerous scavenger hunts and fun activities throughout the year.

The routes also include the installation of raised beds for the community to grow herbs, fruit, vegetables and flowers.

The draft maps are out for comment at the moment, and we have taken delivery of the lecterns, raised beds and marker posts. Installation is expected to take place during the autumn 2023 in Abingdon and next year in Didcot.

- **YOU MOVE Swimming Case Study and feedback**

As part of the You Move programme, 21 primary school age children have been able to access swimming lessons at Hagbourne swimming pool. These lessons were aimed at children who can't swim or are only just starting to learn and were provided at a cost of £1 a session for the participants, with You Move funding covering the rest of the costs. All 21 children improved in

their abilities and confidence throughout the eight week course. Parents had the following to say about the sessions:

“They have been incredible, and my children are desperate to get in the pool each week. Jess has been great, and Jo was out of this world. Jo had the kids laughing and smiling throughout the session.”

“Both our children have enjoyed it, their confidence has come on so much over the weeks of swimming, it is great to watch each week. Jess has been such a good teacher with all the children! Shame it will be coming to an end.”

“I cannot thank you enough for this opportunity you have given to my children. Their confidence and ability in the water has been amazing! I just wish there was something local that was affordable to keep lessons up as it's such a much-needed life skill.”

“The pool was beautiful and of a very high standard as were the changing facilities. The instructors/staff all incredible, they were very friendly, supportive and patient! Thank you so much!”

“I just wanted to let you how brilliant and valuable the swimming lessons have been. My daughter's ability has grown so much in such a short time. We have had other lessons, but these ones have, by far, been the best we have attended. They don't do well with loud noises, so the limited class size and the small pool have helped.”

“Ann is welcoming, enthusiastic and friendly. Jess and Jo have been excellent and patient teachers. I have watched each lesson and the whole group have improved in swimming ability and confidence in the water. I would recommend these lessons to everyone. I am so pleased with how they have turned out.”

#### **Budgetary implications**

4. External funding has been received from OCC Public Health via Active Oxfordshire. The holiday activities have been funded by Didcot Garden Town, Community Safety and You Move and have been delivered predominantly by the Active Communities team. The majority of activities were free for residents to attend or had a minimal cost which was heavily subsidised.

#### **Equalities implications**

5. All activities are inclusive and by being delivered at low cost or free are accessible to all families. Activities were also taken out to rural villages reducing the need for travel and enabling residents to be active in their own communities. The actions in the strategy do not disadvantage any sectors of the community.

## Communications

6. The activities delivered throughout the summer were promoted locally through social media, in newsletters and through partners. Information was shared about Move Together, You Move and the rest of the summer timetable with parents and guardians face to face at hosted events and at a number of summer fetes and health days the team have attended. The events encouraged residents to come together, play and be active. They also gave numerous ideas they could use themselves in the park with friends and family, and in some cases introducing them to their own outdoor spaces that they were not previously aware of.

## Key Dates

7. The Summer programme ran from 25 July to 2 September 2023. Future activities will be provided during school holiday periods.

Report by Jayne Bolton  
[September 2023]

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## Appendices

- South and Vale Active Communities Strategy
- Powerpoint presentation