

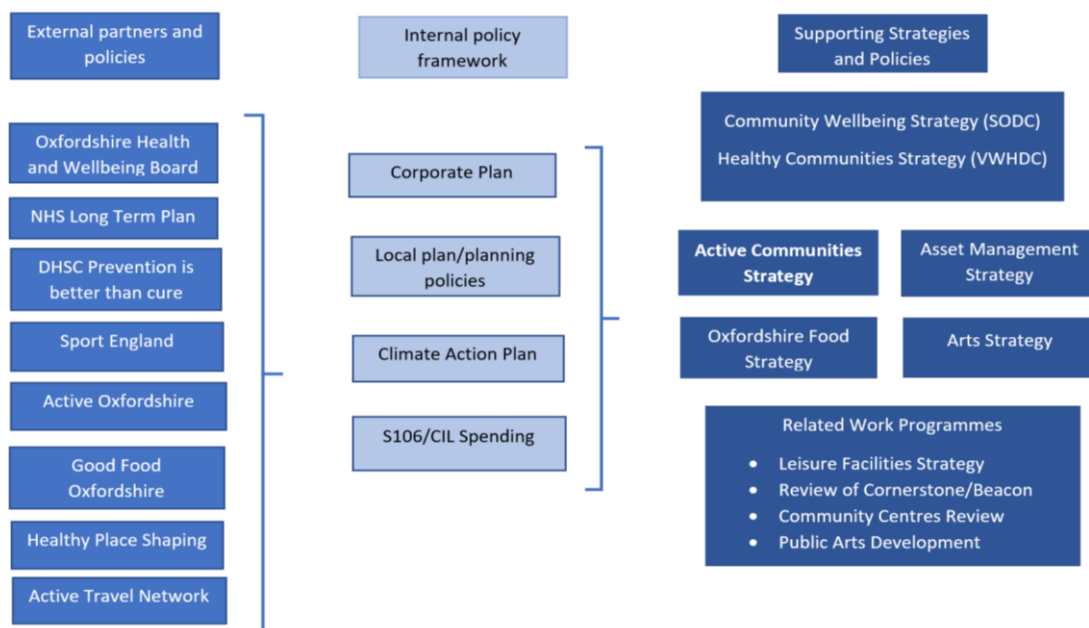
Active Communities strategy

Be Active, Be Healthy, Be Happy

Introduction

This Active Communities 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 diagram below illustrates where this strategy sits within the overarching policy framework for health and active communities within Oxfordshire.



Vision and aims

The councils’ **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.

Our **aims** are to:

- Enable individuals and communities to improve the quality of their own lives.
- Encourage and support local initiatives that make a real difference in addressing wellbeing and inequalities.
- Increase the range and awareness of active opportunities available across the districts for individuals and communities to take part.

We will maximise active opportunities within our local communities by making use of:



Green Spaces

For the purposes of this strategy, green space is defined as open space – an area of grass, trees, or other vegetation - available for recreational or aesthetic purposes.



Blue Spaces

For the purpose of this strategy, blue space is defined as outdoor environments – either natural or manmade – that prominently feature water, either to be in, on or for sensory benefit.



Social, Community and Leisure Activity Infrastructure

For the purposes of this strategy, social, community and leisure activity infrastructure is defined as community infrastructure which supports exercise, entertainment or physical activities. E.g. playground equipment, outdoor gyms, social activities/games equipment or skateparks

Our six themes

We have identified six key themes in support of our vision and aims and will use these to guide and shape our active communities delivery plans in the coming years.

Theme 1 – Enabling everyone to be active

We will ensure sustainable, inclusive, local interventions to support residents to keep healthy, both physically and mentally, aiming to remove many of the traditional barriers to activity, such as cost and location.

We will offer programmes and initiatives that focus on target groups, including children, older people, disabled people, those with long-term health conditions, people with mental health issues and those for whom cost may be restrictive.

Example activity - Providing activities for young people in partnership with Active Oxfordshire, local schools, sports clubs, our parks team, children’s centres, and leisure providers. Projects will include school holiday activities, family orienteering events and a targeted programme of discounted and free activities for children eligible for free school meals.

Theme 2 - Create healthier communities through walking and cycling

We will increase opportunities to walk and cycle safely using local infrastructure and networks of footpaths and cycleways across our district. We will promote the benefits of staying active and will look to ensure the provision of activities within a 20-minute journey time where possible.

We will introduce schemes that encourage healthy walks as part of daily life and look at ways of providing bicycles to those who might not otherwise be able to access them. We will encourage bike borrowing schemes to enable more people to cycle regularly and introduce walking trails and way finding routes to encourage more people to take local journeys on foot.

Example activity - Promoting existing digital apps and websites that provide information about the network of footpaths and cycleways that we have across the districts and provide links to these on our website for easy access.

Theme 3 – Maximise the potential of our natural environment

Access to green and blue spaces is considered important for mental health and wellbeing. We will promote our surroundings and encourage all residents to be active where they live. We will use our natural infrastructure to provide a place for physical activity, relaxation, social interaction, and community events.

We will promote our green and blue resources as locations to host activities, including water sports, wellbeing walks and nature themed activities. We will create more community gardens in our towns and villages to maximise the benefits of growing fruit and vegetables to be shared among the local community. We will work with parishes to support the provision of allotments for residents where possible.

Example activity - Promoting community gardening as a way of getting fit and feeling good, promote healthy eating and links with food workshops contributing to a healthy diet as well as promoting the activity involved in gardening.

Theme 4 – Building the skills base of our communities

We will develop the skills base of our communities, working with the local workforce and communities to make it sustainable. Our coaches, instructors and volunteers will be recruited, developed, and supported along their desired pathway.

We will create a coach development programme based on recruitment, retention, recognition and celebration, which will support club and community development. We will look at employment opportunities for apprentices and build intergenerational skills sharing working with National Governing Bodies of Sport to access the best training for our sports coaches.

Example activity - Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers within the community by offering ongoing training, support and celebration.

Theme 5 – Effective communication, promotion and consultation

We will gain valuable insight and increased knowledge of all that is available on our doorsteps. We will map all the provision and engage with our communities to get a true picture of what active opportunity is available, what is underutilised and where there are gaps in provision.

We will make more effective use of social media, expand the use of our newsletters, and make better use of the council’s website. We will focus on engagement through face-to-face conversations, steering groups, and feedback forums with community groups. We will engage with our communities to promote the opportunities available to them and consult with them to ensure that our own interventions meet the needs of our residents.

Example activity - Completing a full mapping exercise of all existing provision in the districts, in partnership with parishes - classes, activities and existing facilities, such as outdoor gym equipment, public tennis courts and community sports clubs, including new and future developments.

Theme 6 – Collaborative partnerships and funding advice

Partnership working has far-reaching benefits, ensuring resources go further and best practice is shared. We will work in partnership with all sectors across our district to enhance the provision that can be provided.

Working with local partners, we will access funding to support projects and gain the benefits of working collaboratively. We will support our local clubs, schools, community groups and local parishes to apply for funding, helping them remain independent and sustainable.

Example activity - Offer advice and support to parishes, schools, clubs and communities seeking S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding to improve their facilities.

Our delivery plan

To ensure delivery of our vision, we will maintain a sustainable evolving documented delivery plan. The council’s delivery plan will focus around four key areas:

- Mapping and undertaking a gap analysis of current provision across the district.
- Connecting and developing an active community partnership network between residents, community groups, parishes and businesses.
- Identifying and delivering a programme of projects, activities, and opportunities to improve physical, mental and social wellbeing.
- Ensuring communication, promotion, and continued engagement of active opportunities.

Conclusion

As a council, we are committed to working in partnership to deliver high quality, sustainable facilities, services, and activities for all, ensuring that residents can enjoy healthy lifestyles in an enabling and local environment. This strategy presents our vision for everyone to **Be Active, Be Healthy, Be Happy.**

