

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Consortium and Steering Group

- 1.1 The OVID (Oxfordshire VCS Infrastructure Development) Consortium was formed to support the development of proposals for strengthening voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure in the county, in accordance with guidance from DEFRA. The Consortium comprised a cross section of voluntary and community sector and local authority representatives (see Appendix 1 'Members of OVID Consortium').
- 1.2 The first meeting in April 2004 approved the terms of reference for the Consortium (see Appendix 2), appointed a Steering Group and enabled participating organisations to make initial input to the project. A second Consortium meeting in May considered the results of research undertaken so far and gave feedback on work undertaken, and a third meeting in June unanimously agreed the principles on which this proposal should be based. The Consortium met again in July to finalise the text of the Proposal.

### Accountable Body

- 1.3 The Consortium appointed Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) as its accountable body. Details of the organisation are set out in appendix 4.

### Consultants

- 1.4 Neil Gardiner and Wendy Saunders of Gardiner & Saunders Consultants were appointed to help take forward the initiative. The appointment was formalised at the first Steering Group meeting on 7 April 2004. The Consortium wishes to place on record its thanks to them for their contribution to shaping this proposal.

### Oxfordshire context

- 1.5 Oxfordshire has a total population of about 607,500 (ONS mid-year estimate for 2002). At the 2001 census the distribution of the resident population was as follows:

	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Av. Pop. of Parish</u>	<u>% of Total County Pop.</u>
Oxford City	134,248	-	22
Towns (9)	193,869	21,541	32
Rural Parishes (308)	277,371	901	46
Oxfordshire	605,488	-	100

Nearly half of the population are scattered across a large number of rural parishes (using the Countryside Agency's definition), 95% of which have a population of under 3,000. Many rural parishes have more than one settlement within their boundaries, so that the average size of distinct rural settlements is substantially less than 900. The 9 towns vary in size from Banbury (about 42,000) to Henley (about 10,600). Four of them (Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney) are designated as growth centres in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.

- 1.6 In terms of ethnicity, the 2001 census identified about 95% of Oxfordshire's population as white, the remaining 5% falling into 13 different categories of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. However, the proportion of the local population classified under the BME categories varied considerably according to location:

<u>Location</u>	<u>BME groups as % of local population</u>
Oxford	13
Towns	5
Rural Parishes	2

Looking at the distribution of BME groups across the county, the largest concentration was in Oxford (64%). In total there were slightly more people classified under the BME categories in rural parishes (20%) than in towns (16%), but those in the rural parishes were scattered over a much larger population and a much larger number of settlements.

- 1.7 Oxfordshire is generally a prosperous county with a very low rate of unemployment (1.1% in April 2004). The largest concentrations of people suffering from social exclusion (as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) are found in the largest urban areas (Oxford and Banbury), but fieldwork has identified individuals or small clusters of people suffering from social exclusion in the majority of rural parishes as well. The difficulties of the latter have been exacerbated by the continuing trend towards centralisation of services in towns. As new and more detailed data sources become available, they will be used to inform and guide the work programme outlined in this Proposal.

### **Research**

- 1.8 From the outset the Consortium was aware of the lack of recent systematic and comprehensive information about the voluntary and community sector and their infrastructure support needs in Oxfordshire. The consultants were directed to undertake the following research to fill in some of the gaps in the information available:
- (a) To identify the priority needs for the development of infrastructure services to support voluntary and community activity at a local level in rural communities.
  - (b) To explore how the networking and co-ordination of voluntary and community activities should be developed and sustained.
  - (c) To investigate the need and extent of support for a coherent long term strategy to guide the development of generalist voluntary and community sector infrastructure across Oxfordshire, and to explore key issues in the preparation of a strategy in consultation with stakeholders, especially Local Authorities.

The research methodology and the key findings are summarised in Table 1 on pages 4 and 5.

- 1.9 The Consortium recognises that this work represents only the first step in mapping the current state of the voluntary and community sector in the county and identifying development needs. It begins to benchmark the current state of the sector and will need to be repeated at a later date to identify where progress has been made.
- 1.10 Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action commissioned consultants Gray-King & Gray Ltd to carry out research that investigated VCS infrastructure needs in the rapidly growing towns of Bicester (population 28,700) and Didcot (population 22,800). This work, funded by the ACU, produced the report '*Filling the Gaps*' and the Consortium was also able to draw on these findings. This enabled the Group to take a broad view of the needs for VCS infrastructure development across both rural and urban communities in Oxfordshire. The Consortium is grateful to OCVA for permission to make use of this information.
- 1.11 On the basis of this and other data collected, section 2 on page 6 provides a brief survey of key issues for:
  - the voluntary and community sector generally in Oxfordshire;
  - voluntary and community activity in rural communities; and
  - the voluntary and community sector infrastructure in the county.

**Table 1: Summary of Research**

Activity	Methodology	Key Outcomes/Issues
<p><b>Strand 1</b></p> <p><b>Community level research identifying the priority infrastructure needs for rural communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct contact with wide range of communities and community representatives</li> <li>• Attendance at events and interviews with active involved individuals to identify the priority infrastructure needs within their communities</li> <li>• Background research – consulting Parish Plans and other relevant research across the county</li> <li>• Interviews with key voluntary sector representatives especially those with responsibility for community development activity</li> <li>• Consulting with a sample of people living in rural areas who were asked to ‘road test’ the developing proposals through village focus groups. Asking them to comment on the developed proposals and to identify gaps and further issues of concern.</li> </ul> <p><b>Numbers consulted</b>                      103 individuals                      74 communities/villages                      For details see Appendix 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support required on how to involve and engage the whole village community: inclusive and comprehensive consultation involving everyone in a rural community or village</li> <li>• Support needed to develop local networks with other villages and rural communities with similar concerns. To learn from their experience of working on similar projects and on addressing issues of common concern</li> <li>• Help on working with village groups to provide advice and support on developing funding, resources and management for projects</li> </ul>

Strand of activity	Methodology	Key Outcomes/Issues
<p><b>Strand 2</b></p> <p><b>Networks and Forums</b>  <b>To explore how the voluntary and community sector currently network and co-ordinate activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with key voluntary and community sector representatives (face to face and by telephone)</li> <li>• Direct contact with a wide range of communities and representatives of communities</li> <li>• Attendance at events and interviews with active involved individuals to gather their experiences of forums and networks and to explore their priority needs in this area</li> <li>• Background research – identifying good practice of the establishment of successful forums elsewhere in the country</li> </ul> <p><b>Numbers consulted</b>  Interviews – 16  87 individuals at events  69 communities / villages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The county and district forums that do exist are generally not well known or publicised. Some confusion over their role, membership and remit.</li> <li>• Strong and consistent support for the development of a voluntary and community sector forum per district across the county, based on the Cherwell Forum model.</li> <li>• Concern over lack of engagement and limited awareness of Oxfordshire Community Partnership</li> <li>• Recognition of the need to employ a Forum Development worker for 18 months to help establish and develop the district forums to a point where locally based Steering Groups could take over the running.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strand 3</b></p> <p><b>Strategy for the development of generalist voluntary and community sector infrastructure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions/interviews with key Chief Officers and others from existing generic infrastructure organisations and other key stakeholders</li> <li>• Discussions/interviews with key local authority staff</li> <li>• Background research on how other counties had tackled infrastructure development in a strategic manner.</li> </ul> <p><b>Number consulted</b>  Interviews – 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the current weak and undeveloped state of Oxfordshire’s infrastructure it was suggested that a small Working Group should be established (from the 4 existing generalist organisations) made up of the Managers and Chairs. The group should be independently facilitated, working over a 9 month period.</li> <li>• Terms of references agreed. Work undertaken to map services provided to the sector by the 4 organisations. Review existing databases.</li> <li>• Design and implement protocols for future joint planning and service delivery.</li> <li>• Produce a 3 year costed strategic plan outlining the development of organisations and services.</li> <li>• Marketing work undertaken to ensure all key stakeholders are aware of work. Work to be completed/ publicised by summer 2005.</li> </ul>

## 2. ISSUES FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

### **Voluntary and community organisations generally**

- 2.1 Within the county there is a wide-ranging and diverse voluntary and community sector, with large numbers of small groups carrying out a wide range of activities at a local and grassroots level. For example:
- The directory maintained by Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action (OCVA) lists approximately 1,000 groups and organisations. The organisations listed in this directory tend to be those working to address social issues with few leisure and sports organisations being included.
  - The listing of VCOs on the County Council's website has nearly 3,000 entries.
  - The recent '*Filling the Gaps*' report undertook research in two urban areas into the numbers of voluntary and community organisations. They estimated 117 for Didcot and 153 for Bicester. From this information, it would appear that there is approximately 1 voluntary and community organisation per 185 - 200 people in these two areas.
  - The great majority of rural settlements have a variety of voluntary and community organisations, ranging from those that are registered charities with formal constitutions and property (e.g. village hall management committees) to ad hoc groups that disperse once their task has been accomplished (such as parish plan working groups). Some are linked to county or even national networks (for example, Women's Institutes) but many are not, and a feature of village-based groups and organisations is that they tend not to have active links with other parts of the voluntary and community sector.
  - Voluntary and community groups working in rural communities undertake a wide range of activities including lunch clubs, day-care relief, transport services and environmental activities, as well as numerous sport, leisure and cultural groups. There are significant numbers of people involved (at various levels) in these activities but the infrastructure services required for support, although available are limited in capacity. OCVA average between 40 and 60 volunteer contacts each month, while a survey carried out in 2002 showed 4226 volunteers active across 14 neighbourhood groups, 20 district groups, 26 county wide groups and 5 regional groups (from 65 responses received).
- 2.2 Few of these organisations are supported by the statutory sector through Service Level Agreements, and there is a much greater reliance on annual grants and other forms of short-term funding. This has led to a culture where longer term strategic planning and development have been insufficiently developed.
- 2.3 Across the county the VCS has varying degrees of engagement with statutory agencies. In Cherwell, for example, the Voluntary and Community

Sector Forum works alongside the District Council in an effective and productive way. However, this type of engagement between the sector and local authorities is not common in the county, although the beginnings of change can be found (for example, in South Oxfordshire). As a consequence the voluntary and community sector does not have a strong, cohesive or effective 'voice'. However, where there is good practice and progress has been made, it is the intention that the planning and delivery of this work will strengthen and build upon existing foundations.

- 2.4 It is clear that the statutory authorities across the county (i.e. local authorities and Primary Care Trusts) all have differing approaches to the voluntary sector, and there has not been a history of joint working in terms of the delivery of funding, expectations of the sector, provision of services and strategic objectives. Until work began eight months ago on developing a Compact between statutory authorities and voluntary and community organisations in Oxfordshire, the issues of infrastructure and strategic perspectives had not been discussed collectively.
- 2.5 There are a number of issues which make it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain volunteers and to recruit staff and trustees to the voluntary and community sector. The recent research undertaken in May 2004 by OCVA '*Filling the Gaps*' highlighted the difficulty many organisations face in the county of recruiting volunteers and committee members. The current low level of unemployment (1.1%) is a contributory factor along with changing lifestyles, but there are other important concerns. These include the growing responsibilities associated with serving as a member of a Board ("*It's the legislation that will choke off voluntary groups, left right and centre*": '*Filling the Gaps*' research) and the growth in the leisure industry ("*People don't do something for nothing anymore, not if they can get the chance for paid work*": '*Filling the Gaps*' research).

#### **Voluntary and community activity in rural communities**

- 2.6 The research gathered information about types of projects that village community groups are currently undertaking, the priority support needs for this work, the existing links these groups have made to networks and forums at a local level, and to the sources of support, help and advice already available.
- 2.7 The main needs identified by participants were:
- (a) Help and support in community planning within their village. In particular, they were keen to receive more help and support in ensuring that all members of a village community were involved, particularly in the consultation stage. Many respondents identified both the importance and the challenge of ensuring that their consultation work was comprehensive and that everyone within the village had an opportunity to participate and to make a contribution.

- (b) Help with linking and networking with other villages and rural communities who were addressing similar issues or concerns. The idea of learning from other 'rural action groups' and village communities through networks was strongly and enthusiastically supported. Areas identified where such peer learning could take place were the involvement of young people, issues relating to village services, planning concerns, environmental projects and traffic.
- (c) Help in planning, managing and funding projects. Funding advice was an element of this, but the support required was much broader and included issues as wide-ranging as help on business / project planning and project management.
- (d) Supportive community development workers helping to provide support for the above priorities; enabling wider and more inclusive consultation and engagement and helping to nurture grass root, low key networking and skills sharing on a locality basis.

2.8 Another key element of the feedback from rural communities was the issue of how to address rural social exclusion. It was considered by many that current work to support and assist rural communities was not as effective as it could be in 'reaching' those individuals and families who were experiencing particular disadvantage or isolation, because of the difficulties of working with such small and widely dispersed groups. Examples included families containing members with mental health problems, older people and other marginalised groups. Feedback from a number of individuals who are working within supporting agencies (e.g. Oxford Council for Voluntary Youth Services, Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters and Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People) reinforced the view that "*more needs to be done*" and that "*we are not currently reaching the hard to reach who live in rural communities*".

2.9 There was a view that new and different approaches to addressing the problem of rural social exclusion needed to be developed, in an attempt to recognise and understand the needs and to provide the appropriate and effective levels of help and support. This work would also aim to contribute to and influence the strategic priorities of the local authorities, making a difference to the development and delivery of community strategy action plans.

#### **Voluntary and community activity in new urban communities**

2.10 The investigation of VCS infrastructure development needs in Bicester and Didcot also showed the need for greater support for residents of new and expanding estates in the main growth towns in Oxfordshire, where there is limited access to services and community facilities. In these circumstances, a key focus would be on building links with traditionally 'hard to reach' communities (for example, BME groups) to ensure effective support is available as well as appropriate opportunities for engagement in wider

initiatives. The '*Filling the Gaps*' report highlighted the need for direct help and support on funding issues ("*Can they fill out the forms for us?*") and identified a clear need for appropriate and effective forums, where voluntary and community sector organisations can meet to share ideas and concerns at a grass roots level.

### **Voluntary and community sector infrastructure**

- 2.11 It is widely acknowledged, both within and outside the sector, that in Oxfordshire the existing voluntary and community sector infrastructure is weak. The services provided by existing VCS infrastructure organisations are generally effective, but there is a significant mismatch between the capacity of the latter and the support needs of the wider voluntary and community sector. There is a history of limited investment within the county by local authorities and an acknowledgement within the Consortium that any long term development will be dependent on this changing.
- 2.12 The county currently has two generic VCS infrastructure organisations with a countywide remit, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) and Oxfordshire Council Voluntary Action (OCVA). There are also two generic infrastructure organisations based in two of the county's growth towns and having a more local remit: Witney Volunteer Link-Up (a volunteer bureau) and Banbury CVS. The four organisations offer a diverse range of services and are at differing stages of development. There is a recognition by their Chief Officers that there needs to be improved communication and understanding relating to what services each organisations is currently providing and of any development plans. It is recognised that this would lead to greater joint working, co-operation and more efficient service delivery that will be pro-active, needs led and would build and share experiences between the agencies.
- 2.13 In addition there are a number of local organisations (usually identified as volunteer bureaux) that have a clear direct service delivery remit, often with a strong focus on transport services. These (whilst playing some role in this work) tend not to have a strong focus on the delivery of infrastructure functions and services, capacity building and development. There are therefore significant gaps in the provision of infrastructure support across the county.
- 2.14 Overall, much of the sector is fragmented, working in isolation with limited resources and without a clear strategic development plan. The sector in the county tends to lack a 'strategic culture' and has a weak history of wide-ranging and effective infrastructure provision. Much of the focus is on direct service delivery with limited wider appreciation of the importance of infrastructure provision. There are limited examples of joint planning and delivery between organisations. The development and delivery of training has been weak to date, although the recent success of a bid by OCVA in

partnership with other VCOs to the MKOB LSC gives the opportunity for this to be addressed more effectively in the future.

- 2.15 The creation of the OVID Consortium to work on the DEFRA infrastructure initiative has been a positive development in the county, as it is the first time that such a broad cross section of infrastructure organisations and staff from Local Authorities have undertaken partnership work relating to infrastructure development. This development has resulted in a much greater awareness of the needs within the county, particularly related to infrastructure provision, and has enabled the development of a significant degree of consensus over the way forward through a clearly-focused and effective strategy.

### **3. PROPOSAL**

#### **Overview**

- 3.1 It is clear from the above summaries that there is a wide range of issues for the VCS in Oxfordshire in both urban and rural areas, all deserving attention. In an attempt to make a balanced and constructive response to a broad range of the issues highlighted by the research, the Steering Group initially developed six separate proposals for action supported by Main Spend funding. However at the Consortium meeting on 17 June 2004 it was agreed that a key to the long term sustainability of measures to integrate and strengthen VCS infrastructure in the county was the development of a strategic approach to which the statutory as well as the voluntary and community sector could sign up (see paragraph 2.14). This is therefore the focus of the Consortium's proposal for work supported by Main Spend funding.
- 3.2 The Consortium also agreed on the need for extra support for particular aspects of the process of developing a strategy:
- (a) Adequate and stable funding is a prime requirement for long term sustainability, in terms both of funding for infrastructure development and funding for service delivery by the VCS. This is lacking at present (see paragraphs 2.2, 2.7(c) and 2.14). The proposal therefore includes measures for work on this aspect that will feed into the final strategy.
  - (b) The Consortium was mindful of the emphasis in DEFRA's guidance on the need both for a rural focus and to address rural social exclusion – as well as of the inadequacy of existing activity within the county (see paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9). It therefore agreed to include measures for work to collate existing information about rural social exclusion and to explore new and innovative approaches to working with socially excluded groups in rural communities. This should ensure that the issue is properly addressed in the strategy.

- (c) Conscious of the lack of an existing framework for consulting and engaging with the wider VCS in Oxfordshire (see paragraph 2.3), the Consortium also agreed that the proposal should include measures to ensure that there is an active and well attended forum for the VCS in each district in Oxfordshire.

3.3 Whilst these proposals have been written to follow the guidance in the DEFRA '*Specification and Advice to Partnerships*' (and in particular para. 7), it is clear that wider needs have been identified within the county. Therefore, these proposals represent an initial expression of the actions to be taken to address these needs, and it is anticipated that they will be revisited (and revised) when guidance is received from the Active Communities Directorate.

#### **Main Objectives**

3.4 The Consortium's proposal has one main objective and three subsidiary objectives that correspond to the main strand and three subsidiary strands described above:

- (a) To produce a strategy for developing and integrating voluntary and community sector infrastructure in Oxfordshire up to March 2009 (i.e. 3 years beyond the end of Main Spend funding in March 2006) that commands the support of both statutory authorities and the VCS generally in Oxfordshire.
- (b) In particular, to include within the strategy measures to provide:
  - i. a framework for funding the development of VCS infrastructure that is supported by both statutory and voluntary agencies;
  - ii. a more effective and co-ordinated multi-agency approach to promoting social inclusion in rural communities; and
  - iii. a comprehensive network of district-level forums to facilitate consultation and engagement with the wider VCS in the development and implementation of the strategy (see para 3.8).

3.5 The strategy will be adapted and refined in response to the extensive consultation carried out throughout the development process. A key element of this will be feedback from the new district Forums, monitoring the planned and delivered actions.

#### **Implementation**

3.6 As noted in paragraph 2.12, there are four generic VCS infrastructure organisations in Oxfordshire: Banbury CVS, Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and Witney Volunteer Link-Up. The production of the strategy will be directed and managed by a Steering Group consisting of the Chairs and Chief Officers of all four organisations. An independent facilitator will chair the Group. The Steering Group will liaise closely with the local authorities and statutory

sector and will be able to invite representatives of these organisations to contribute, where this is considered helpful to the process.

- 3.7 The Steering Group will take responsibility for guiding the development of this work, following the key objectives set out above and addressing issues as they arise from the work. They will also manage an open and inclusive process whereby appropriate organisations will have the opportunity to bid to deliver elements of the agreed work programme in the county.
- 3.8 The work will include the following actions:

***Primary Objective***

A Strategy

- mapping services provided to the voluntary and community sector by the generic VCS infrastructure organisations (including: funding advice, identifying and mapping community needs, personnel support, training and development, development and support of partnership working, finance services, capacity building, representation, mediation, IT and databases and volunteering development work);
- help to develop engagement and involvement with Local Strategic Partnerships and, at a local level, encourage the involvement of the local voluntary and community sector in the Community Planning process;
- reviewing existing databases on local voluntary activity;
- producing proposals for ensuring uniform access from all parts of the county to VCS infrastructure services;
- designing, agreeing and implementing protocols for joint planning and service delivery by the existing generic organisations;
- producing proposals for integrating the strategy with the development and implementation of the new Oxfordshire Compact, a key document for the voluntary as well as the statutory sector; and
- considering the need to develop further support related to community planning, community development and networking and links between communities with shared concerns (see para 2.7).

***Subsidiary Objectives***

B(i) Integrated Funding Framework

- mapping the current sources and levels of funding available within the county, and identifying future funding requirements over the period of the strategy;
- mapping the extent and quality of funding advice available within the county (both within the sector and in the Local Authorities), and identifying gaps;

- providing precise and timely information to generic VCS organisations about funding opportunities, and assisting them in engaging more effectively with major funders;
- promoting the development of a strategic approach to funding VCS infrastructure across the county;
- helping to deliver a protocol on funding within the framework of the new Oxfordshire Compact; and
- delivering a minimum of 3 funding advice surgeries a month (45 delivered over a 15 month period) to a range of voluntary and community organisations across the county. The surgeries will take into account the need to cover all districts and to support those groups that have been unsuccessful with funding applications in the past.

B(ii) Rural Social Exclusion

- completing the mapping of existing work on reducing social exclusion in rural Oxfordshire already begun by ORCC;
- evaluating the effectiveness of a range of approaches to capacity building work with socially excluded groups in rural communities by taking an action learning approach and demonstrating some new ways of working;
- raising awareness of the nature and extent of the issue and, in particular, seeking the active involvement of rural communities in the county in promoting social inclusion;
- disseminating the findings to all relevant agencies in the county; and
- developing proposals for filling the gaps identified and assessing the resources required, within the context of the strategy.

B(iii) District Forums

- promoting the development of district based forums where they do not exist, building on what already exists and working sensitively to ensure the particular needs of each district are taken into account. This approach will focus on ensuring funding goes to local organisations wherever possible, with the local process of identifying suitable delivery organisations being managed through the Steering Group noted in para 3.4: Banbury CVS would be expected to take forward the development of the activities of the existing forum in Cherwell district, encouraging people from the VCS to participate;
- working to develop more effective and sustainable links between the wider voluntary and community sector and the work of key strategic partnerships, and in particular the LSPs;
- developing district based databases to ensure communication with all parts of the sector; this will involve the setting up of a basic

system of compatible, shared content standards, capable of future development and integration into countywide structures;

- setting up district-based planning groups and working with them to ensure the development of each forum is lead by local needs;
- organising forum meetings, including: organising venues, liaison with officers from statutory agencies about topics/issues, planning and issuing agendas, and facilitating activities at meetings; and
- forums will be one of the fundamental mechanisms for informing the VCS organisations of the progress of the infrastructure strategic development and ensuring that consultation on their infrastructure needs is effective and inclusive.

**Milestones**

3.8 The process of producing the final version of the strategy will be extended over a period of nineteen months to allow time for the work on the funding framework, the developments of the district VCS forums and approaches to addressing rural social exclusion to show positive results. This does not, however, mean that the development of VCS infrastructure will be ‘on hold’ until the strategy has been adopted. The work will produce a variety of beneficial ‘interim results’: for example, improved information about funding opportunities, a better understanding of rural social exclusion in the county, improved networking in the VCS in each district. In effect, this will be the period during which the foundations for implementing the strategy after March 2006 will be laid.

3.9 The milestones against which progress will be assessed are set out as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
December 2004	Strategy development: initial meetings completed
March 2005	Circulation of draft consultation of document outlining key elements of strategy
March 2005	Completion of first district Forums
April 2005	District databases completed
December 2005	Draft strategy published
March 2006	Strategy launch

**Timelines**

3.10 Timelines for the progress of the various aspects of the work are set out in Table 2 on pages 15 and 16.

**Table 2: Timelines**

Area of work	Action	Sept '04	Oct '04	Nov '04	Dec '04	Jan '05	Feb '05	Mar '05	Apr '05	May '05	June '05	July '05	Aug '05	Sept '05	Oct '05	Nov '05	Dec '05	Jan '06	Feb '06	Mar '06	Cross Reference	
A Strategy	Strategy Steering Group convenes	X																				
B Strategy	Facilitator has 1-2-1 meetings with all Chief Officers and trustees		—————																			
C Strategy	First bulletin to stakeholders (to be produced every three months)					X			X			X			X				X			Forums C
D Strategy	Circulation of draft consultation document (key elements of strategy)							X														RSE A/B Forums C
E Strategy	Consultation period							—————														Funding E Forums E
F Strategy	Liaison with funders and key stakeholders on strategy development and implications							—————														
G Strategy	Focus groups with cross-section of representatives from the VCS							—————														Forums C
H Strategy	Development Awaydays for Steering group										—————											
I Strategy	Production of draft strategy														—————							RSE C/D Funding F
J Strategy	Draft strategy published																X					Forums C
K Strategy	Draft rewritten with timed and costed action plan																		—————			RSE E
L Strategy	Launch of strategy																				X	Forums C
A RSE	Mapping of existing Rural Social Exclusion work		—————																			Strategy D
B RSE	Action learning demonstration project		—————																			Strategy D
C RSE	Seminar to discuss/disseminate lessons learnt from pilot														X							Strategy I
D RSE	Proposals to address identified gaps produced														X							Strategy I
E RSE	Report on effectiveness of different approaches on tackling RSE																	X				Strategy K

Area of work	Action	Sept '04	Oct '04	Nov '04	Dec '04	Jan '05	Feb '05	Mar '05	Apr '05	May '05	June '05	July '05	Aug '05	Sept '05	Oct '05	Nov '05	Dec '05	Jan '06	Feb '06	Mar '06	Cross Reference	
A Funding	Identify and recruit suitable staffing/worker	X																				
B Funding	Establish links with Compact Funding Protocol Group		X																			
C Funding	Funding bulletin				X			X			X			X			X			X		
D Funding	Minimum of 3 funding advice surgeries held					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
E Funding	Mapping existing funding advice within county								X												Strategy E	
F Funding	Mapping existing funding compiled											X									Strategy I	
G Funding	Funding information Forums held														X						Forums F	
A Forums	District based planning groups established			X																		
B Forums	District based planning groups Chair/vice chair elected			X																		
C Forums	District based forums held						X				X				X				X		Strategy C/D/G/J/L	
D Forums	District based databases created							X														
E Forums	Strategy information disseminated through forums										X										Strategy E	
F Forums	Funding information forums held														X						Funding G	
G Forums	District based databases updated																			X		

### **Outputs and outcomes**

3.11 The proposed outputs and outcomes are as follows:

#### **A Strategy**

##### ***Outputs***

- A 3-year strategic plan for developing VCS infrastructure in Oxfordshire which has the support of both statutory bodies and the VCS generally.
- Development Awaydays for all generic VCS infrastructure organisations.
- More effective links and understanding developed between the voluntary and community sector and key partnerships such as the LSPs and a greater degree of engagement and involvement.
- Assessment of progress in integrating and strengthening VCS infrastructure.

##### ***Outcomes***

- Improved and more widely accessible VCS infrastructure services.
- More effective joint working between generic infrastructure organisations and local authorities.
- Agreement on the requirements for funding the development of VCS infrastructure in Oxfordshire over the period covered by the strategy, and commitments by a wide range of funding bodies to meet those requirements.
- Greater co-operation and sharing of resources and skills.
- Greater understanding of the needs of the infrastructure organisations by existing and potential funders.
- Wider understanding of respective roles of individual organisations.
- Better understanding of infrastructure support needs of the VCS by the 4 generic infrastructure organisations.
- More consistent and integrated local authority support for the VCS.

#### **B(i) Integrated Funding Framework**

##### ***Outputs***

- A minimum of 3 funding information bulletins.
- 45 Funding Advice surgeries held across the county (3 a month for 15 months).
- Document produced and circulated mapping existing funding within the county and identifying gaps and needs.
- Mapping of existing funding advice provision within the county.
- Liaising with the working group that is developing a Compact Funding Protocol to develop a strong working link
- Contribution to Compact Funding Protocol development.
- Each district Forum delivers a Funding Information seminar.

**Outcomes**

- Precise and timely funding information disseminated within the VCS and to other partners.
- More effective funding applications submitted both within the county and externally.
- Increased levels of knowledge and confidence relating to fundraising in the voluntary and community sector.
- Increased levels of funding accessed by groups within the county.
- Greater awareness within the sector of the range of funding opportunities leading to a reduction of grant dependency.
- Gaps in current funding advice identified.
- Greater awareness of the sources of the funding advice, their capacity and expertise leading to more efficient sign posting both within the voluntary sector and in Local Authorities.
- Unified and coherent approach to funding adopted by local authorities through the Compact Funding Protocol.

**B(ii) Rural Social Exclusion**

**Outputs**

- Mapping of existing work undertaken that is addressing rural social exclusion.
- A report produced evaluating the effectiveness of a range of approaches to capacity building work with socially excluded groups in rural Oxfordshire.
- At least one seminar (or similar event) to disseminate to relevant agencies lessons about effective ways of reducing rural social exclusion.
- Proposals developed with budgets to address gaps identified.

**Outcomes**

- Pilot will strengthen and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing posts tackling rural social exclusion.
- Wider understanding of the extent of rural social exclusion and of the key issues relating to it by all relevant agencies.
- Wider understanding of innovative approaches to address the issue of rural social exclusion.
- More effective joint planning and partnership working to address rural social exclusion.
- Reduction in the extent of rural social exclusion in the county.
- Wide range of organisations working in partnership to implement developed proposals.

### **B(iii) District Forums**

#### ***Outputs***

- District based VCS forums held across the county.
- An up-to-date (and continually updated) database of VCS organisations in each district created.
- Further developed mapping of rural community needs.
- District based planning groups established.
- Chair and Vice Chair elected for each Forum.
- Information relating to infrastructure strategy development disseminated to Forums.
- 1 Funding Information Forum held in each district.
- Production of best practice advice on district based forum development produced and circulated by Banbury CVS.

#### ***Outcomes***

- Greater levels of VCS participation in Forums.
- Forums supporting a more effective 'capturing' of rural needs within the county, leading to a more effective and coherent 'rural voice' influencing policy and action.
- Broader and more inclusive consultation.
- Improved understanding of local VCS needs.
- Strengthened links between VCS, local authorities and statutory agencies.
- Greater level of understanding within the wider VCS of key issues, policy development etc.
- Clear mechanism established by which local needs drive the development of each district forum.
- Mechanism by which local infrastructure support needs are fed in to the strategic infrastructure working group.
- Greater networking and mutual support of grass roots community based organisations through the establishing of district based forums.

### **Evaluation and monitoring**

- 3.12 Both the Rural Social Exclusion work (B(ii)) and that associated with the development of an Integrated Funding Framework (B(i)) have associated costs for external evaluation to be completed in the latter stages of the funding period. The budget for the Strategy development (A) has ring-fenced funding to undertake external evaluation. Evaluation of the District Forum work (B(iii)) will be undertaken by a combination of the host organisation and the local district-based Working Group to ensure that each district based forum has developed responsively to local needs.
- 3.13 Monitoring will be carried out through the involvement of the statutory sector (local authorities, PCTs, etc.), the voluntary sector (key stakeholder groups) and the community sector (rural community groups, etc.). District forums

will play a key role in monitoring and reviewing the development of the work set out in these proposals, particularly related to the development of the overall strategy. Monitoring of funding advice will be carried out via 'customer satisfaction' surveys.

### **Sustainability**

- 3.13 Elements of the project, in its current form, are time-limited and will be completed with the production of the strategy by March 2006. However, this will be produced as a working document, to be used as the basis for developing and extending co-operation, joint working and planning over the following years.
- 3.14 The Strategic Working Group would be expected to continue to meet (probably on a 6-monthly basis) to monitor and review the implementation of the strategy and to begin to address the wider issues of strengthening links with local authorities and the greater involvement of a wider range of organisations, particularly specialist infrastructure providers. In addition they would work with the funding development worker to identify potential funding streams to promote the sustainability of this work.
- 3.15 Sustainability of the work on the strategy will be addressed through the following:
- The project, in its current form, is time-limited and will be completed with the production of the strategy by March 2006. However, this will be produced as a working document, to be used as the basis for developing and extending co-operation, joint working and planning over the coming years.
- 3.16 Sustainability of the work on rural social exclusion will be addressed through the following:
- By focusing on a small number of communities, the project worker will avoid creating unrealistic expectations about long term availability to groups in Oxfordshire.
  - The community development approach adopted will ensure that community action is owned by local people. The worker will seek to develop local leadership and sustainable structures, via coaching, a clear explanation of his/her role, and networking with existing community activity and support.
  - The project evaluation will aim to raise awareness of innovative and grassroots approaches to working with pockets of people facing social exclusion, so that infrastructure organisations are able to develop other ongoing programmes to ensure that these groups are not ignored.
- 3.17 Sustainability of the work on district forums will be addressed through the following:

- The leadership and administration for each district-based forum will be gradually taken on by the locally based Steering Group.
- Local Authorities will be encouraged during the 18 months of DEFRA funding to support the development of their forum by in-kind donations. This might be in the form of venues, access to internal networks, staff time, skills or workshop facilitators on specific issues.
- Funding applications could be made by the Steering Group to local and national trusts to help with other costs that the Local Authority is unable to meet.
- Members could be asked to pay a nominal membership fee to help ensure the sustainability of the forums.

**Costs and resources**

3.18 An estimate of the costs and additional resources required is set out in Table 3 on pages 22 and 23. The additional resources accessed through this initiative will be used to take forward and build on existing provision, helping to ensure that the existing resources are focused on key priorities for the county.

**Table 3: Costs and Resources**

	Breakdown	Costs	
		£	£
<b>Infrastructure Strategy Development</b>			
Facilitator	20 days @ £350	7,000	
Chief Officer time (x4)	10 days each @ £200 per day	8,000	
Venue/refreshments	10 @ £150 per event	1,500	
Payment to organisations to consult VCS		3,000	
Awaydays (Chief Officers, Trustees, etc.)	4 @ £1200 per event	4,800	
Drafting/production of strategy	10 days @ £350	3,500	
Launch event		1,500	
<b>Sub-total</b>		29,300	
<hr/>			
<b>District Forum Development (equivalent to 0.5 post)</b>			
Supporting and developing district-based forums in Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, Oxford City, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire		25,875	
<b>Sub-total</b>		25,875	

**Integrated Funding Framework (full time post)**

Salary (18 months)	31,500	
NI	3,150	
Pension	1,050	
Travel	2,250	
Training	1,000	
Capital/equipment	500	
Subscriptions to Funding websites, etc.	1,000	
Recruitment	3,000	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<u>43,450</u>

**Rural Social Exclusion (full time post)**

Salary (18 months)	31,500	
NI	3,150	
Pension	1,050	
Travel	3,000	
Training	1,000	
Capital/equipment	1,200	
Recruitment	3,000	
Venue outreach	500	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<u>44,000</u>

**Overall accountability of programme** (external evaluation, management costs, ongoing research needs, etc.)

14,262

**Total for all components**

**156,887**

#### **4. OTHER MATTERS**

- 4.1 This section shows how the Consortium's proposal meets other criteria set out in Appendix 3 of the DEFRA guidance.

##### **Support from local authorities**

- 4.2 Letters of support from the following local authorities in the County are attached to this Proposal:

Cherwell District Council

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (representing parish and town councils)

Oxfordshire County Council

South Oxfordshire District Council

West Oxfordshire District Council

Letters of support from Oxford City Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council are expected and will be forwarded as soon as they are available.

##### **Support from other Consortium members**

- 4.3 The other Consortium members listed in Appendix 1 have all signified their support for this Proposal.

##### **Rural Social Exclusion**

- 4.4 This proposal will provide a strategic framework within which work to reduce social exclusion in rural Oxfordshire will be further developed over the period to March 2009.

##### **Diversity**

- 4.5 A strategy for recognising diversity and the needs of ethnic and other minority groups (including travellers) should include a commitment by all the organisations concerned to: (a) comparing the profile of users of their services with the profile of the population of rural Oxfordshire as a whole, with a view to (b) identifying minority groups that do not avail themselves of these services and (c) targeting outreach at these groups.

- 4.6 The Strategy development work will include a key aim of ensuring that diversity and inclusion issues are addressed fully and shared by participating organisations. The Consortium approach helps to ensure that the range of organisations making up the membership reflects the diverse nature of Oxfordshire's population: a condition of membership will be that participating organisations will have equal opportunities policies.

##### **Innovation and learning**

- 4.7 There is a recognition that this work will lead to significant opportunities for innovation, learning and development across all sectors within Oxfordshire.

The Consortium has expressed a clear willingness to share their learning and experiences with others, both in the sub-region and the region.

**Other issues**

- 4.8 As noted earlier, this Proposal has been developed in response to DEFRA's guidance. However, the process has identified other needs within the county and this document therefore represents an initial expression of interest. The Consortium members are aware that they have not fully addressed all of the cross-cutting themes of the ACU review (volunteering, ICT, BME groups, community development, and social enterprise); however, these will form part of the longer-term strategic plan. In addition, if the funding development post is approved, this is likely to result in 'freeing up' resources to concentrate on volunteering, so this area of work too will benefit. When ACU guidelines are available, there is the possibility of an additional expression of interest for short-term work which will cover more of their cross-cutting themes.

## OVID Main Spend Proposal

## Appendix 1: Members of OVID Consortium

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Age Concern Oxfordshire	Mary Daniel, Age Concern Oxfordshire, St Edmunds House, 39 West St Helens Street, Abingdon, OX14 5BW.
Banbury Council for Voluntary Service	Jim Flux, Chairman, Banbury Council for Voluntary Service, 27 Horsefair, Banbury, OX16 7TN.
Cherwell District Council	Ian Davies, Head of Leisure Services, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA.
Churches Together in Oxfordshire	Bede Gerrard, 26 Denton Close, Oxford, OX2 9BW.
East Oxford Action	Zoe Brooks, Scheme Manager, East Oxford Action, SS Mary and John Church Hall, Cowley Road, Oxford, OX1 1DS.
Faringdon Voluntary Services	The Organiser, Faringdon Voluntary Services, Community Centre, 5 Market Place, Faringdon, SN7 4HL.

## OVID Main Spend Proposal

Mental Health Matters	Emma Mulvey, Information Co-ordinator Rural Issues, Mental Health Matters, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford, OX1 1LD.
Oxford City Council	Craig Buckby, Community Development & Regeneration Officer, Neighbourhood Renewal Business Unit, Oxford City Council, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, St Aldates Chambers, St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1DF.
Oxfordshire Area Consortium for Patient and Public Involvement in Health	Mike Botting, Chief Officer, OACPIH, 5 Bankside, Hanborough Business Park, Long Hanborough, OX29 8LH.
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils	Brian Spragg, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Jericho Farm, Worton, Witney, OX29 4SZ.
Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People	Janet Mace, Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People, 35 Leopold Street, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 1TW.
Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action	Alison Baxter, Director, Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, The Old Court House, Floyds Row, St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1SS.

## OVID Main Spend Proposal

Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services

Collette Selwood,  
Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services,  
Macclesfield House,  
New Road,  
Oxford,  
OX1 1NA.

Oxfordshire County Council

Gwen Davies,  
Communities Team Manager,  
Oxfordshire County Council,  
County Hall,  
New Road,  
Oxford,  
OX1 1ND.

Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum

Clare Mowbray,  
Executive Officer,  
Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum,  
The Manor House,  
Little Wittenham,  
Abingdon,  
OX14 4RA.

Oxfordshire Play Association

Martin French,  
Play Development Manager,  
Oxfordshire Play Association,  
Agriculture House,  
Stanton Harcourt Road,  
Eynsham,  
OX29 4TW.

Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council

John Sailsman,  
Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council,  
The Old Courthouse,  
Floyds Row,  
Oxford,  
OX1 1SS.

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

John Hardwicke,  
Chief Executive,  
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council,  
Jericho Farm,  
Worton,  
Witney,  
OX29 4SZ.

## OVID Main Spend Proposal

South Oxfordshire District Council	Helen Crofts, Partnership Officer, South Oxfordshire District Council, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, OX10 8HQ.
Vale of White Horse District Council	Shirley Entwistle, Assistant Director, Vale of White Horse District Council, Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE.
Wantage Community Information Centre	Dr Graham Curtis, Chairman, Community Information Centre, 16 Market Place, Wantage, OX12 8AE.
West Oxfordshire District Council	Dene Robson, Head of Rural Development, West Oxfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB.
Witney Volunteer Link-up	Anne Crawford, Manager, Volunteer Link-up (West Oxfordshire), The Methodist Church, 10 Wesley Walk, Witney, OX28 6ZJ.

## Appendix 2: OVID Consortium Terms of Reference

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Consortium is to:
- (a) prepare proposals for developing voluntary and community sector infrastructure in Oxfordshire in accordance with guidance from Defra, and
  - (b) submit these proposals to GOSE by 25 June 2005.

### 2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Voluntary and community infrastructure organisations** are those that play a supporting, co-ordinating, representative, policy making and development role for other voluntary and community organisations. (*Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure: A Consultation Document*, Active Community Unit of the Home Office, September 2003)
- 2.2 **Defra** is the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- 2.3 **GOSE** is the Government Office for the South East.

### 3. Membership and Meetings

- 3.1 Membership of the Consortium is open to:
- core members, i.e. voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations active in Oxfordshire;
  - local authorities and other organisations invited by the core members to join.
- 3.2 A list of organisations in membership of the Consortium is attached.
- 3.3 Plenary meetings open to all members of the Consortium will be held as required by members.

### 4. Accountable Body

- 4.1 Oxfordshire Rural Community Council is the accountable body for the Consortium
- 4.2 The accountable body is responsible for undertaking the following activities on behalf of the Consortium:
- receiving and administering Defra funding,
  - accounting to GOSE for the use of Defra funding;
  - convening and maintaining records of Consortium plenary and Steering Group meetings,

- reporting progress regularly to GOSE, and
- preparing and submitting the proposals referred to in paragraph 1.1.

**5. Steering Group and Working Groups**

- 5.1 The Steering Group appointed by the Consortium is responsible for:
- leading its day-to-day work within the policy framework set by plenary meetings (as in paragraph 3.3), and
  - approving expenditure in furtherance of the Consortium's purpose (as in paragraph 1.1), within the available budget.
- 5.2 The members of the Steering Group are:
- Alison Baxter (Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action)
  - Gwen Davies (Oxfordshire County Council)
  - Jim Flux (Banbury Council for Voluntary Service)
  - John Hardwicke (Oxfordshire Rural Community Council)
  - Clare Mowbray (Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum)
- 5.3 The Consortium may appoint working groups to undertake specific tasks, as directed by plenary meetings.
-

**Appendix 3: Communities and Villages involved in research**

Adderbury	Hanwell
Ambrosden	Harpenden
Baldons	Kidlington
Berinsfield	Kingston Bagpuize
Binfield Heath	Launton
Blewbury	Long Wittenham
Bloxham	Mapledurham
Brightwell cum Sotwell	Milcombe
Cassington	Minster Lovell
Chalgrove	Mollington
Checkenden	North Hinksey
Claydon	Risinghurst and Sandhills
Crowmarsh	Sandford on Thames
Culham	Shipton under Wychwood
Drayton	Sonning Common
Duns Tew	South Hinksey
East Hagbourne	Streatley
East Hendred	Tetsworth
Enstone	Upton
Fencott and Murcott	Wardington
Finmere	Watchfield
Great Bourton	West Hagbourne
Grove	Wroxton

In addition, a further 28 villages and communities responded anonymously.

**Appendix 4: Details of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council**

Contact: John Hardwicke, Chief Executive

Address: Oxfordshire Rural Community Council  
Jericho Farm  
Worton  
Witney  
OX29 4SZ

Tel: 01865 883488

Fax: 01865 883191

Email: john.hardwicke@oxonrcc.org.uk

Legal status: Founded in 1920. Incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1990 (no. 2461552). Registered as a charity (no. 900560).

Constitution: Copy of Memorandum and Articles of Association enclosed.

Finance: See Annual Report 2002/03 enclosed with this Proposal (Annual Report 2003/04 to be presented to AGM in October 2004).  
Summary of draft accounts for 2003/04:

	<u>£</u>
Income:	715,513
Expenditure:	649,082
Allocations to Restricted Funds:	53,605
Surplus:	12,826

Main funders (2003/04):  
Countryside Agency  
South East England Development Agency  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Cherwell District Council  
South Oxfordshire District Council  
Vale of White Horse District Council  
West Oxfordshire District Council