

The Way Forward For Whitchurch

Healthcheck and Town Action Plan Report

August 2005



'Through partnership - making our town even better'

Our partners



Whitchurch Town Council



Basingstoke
and Deane



Hampshire
County Council



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1. Foreword

From the Healthcheck Team Chairman Cllr Gill Nethercott

So what were we aiming for by doing this Healthcheck? A Healthcheck is exactly that, it investigates every aspect of the town and its surrounding countryside, Whitchurch is the sick patient. The Healthcheck Team and the project co-ordinator are like a medical team undertaking the tests. The public have been extensively consulted, and have therefore contributed toward and agreed to a remedy.

The results of the Healthcheck have provided the Vision and Action Plan for Whitchurch covering all issues of environment, economy, social and community, transport and accessibility. Everyone in Whitchurch and its catchment area had an opportunity to contribute to the Vision and Action Plan during the consultation. There is no point in trying to turn back the clock but there are some facilities that everyone agrees the town must retain if it is to have a sustainable future.

Undertaking a Healthcheck offered an opportunity to find a remedy for some of the towns problems. Its aim is to bring more life and pride back into the town for the benefit of its resident and visitors. The Healthcheck will compliment the Whitchurch Town Design Statement which is now adopted as supplementary planning guidance, giving further protection to the towns built environment.

I came to live in Whitchurch over thirty years ago when it was very different from today. The main A34 Trunk road traffic divided the town making shopping difficult and indeed sometimes dangerous, as traffic thundered through. Surprisingly, despite the road, the town centre was much busier thirty years ago than today. Whitchurch in the 1970s had four butchers, three greengrocers and six general stores to name but a few, complemented by three banks a building society, solicitors, garages, cleaners, launderette, hairdressers and barbers. The town centre today has fewer retail outlets remaining with fast food and hairdressers seeming to dominate the town. Some rundown and empty shops are blighting the town centre and inappropriate repairs are starting to destroy the character of the Conservation Area.

The coming of the by-pass in 1976 gave the streets back to Whitchurch residents but surprisingly it also took some of the life out of the town and it has slowly decreased in vitality. The increase in HGV tonnage has become an issue with extremely long vehicles now passing through the town. The increase in car ownership has also brought parking problems on our streets and with the increase in commuters a log jam around the railway station. There is rising concern for the future of the town with an increasing number of interlinked problems brought to the attention of Town, Borough and County Councils. The Market Town Healthcheck seemed to offer a positive way forward to look at all the Town's problems as a whole; not one isolated from another.

After completing the consultation, the Healthcheck Team have addressed the issues and resident's concerns and have public support for ten initial projects. All of which contribute towards the overall Vision for the Town and its prospects in the near, medium and long term.



All Hallows Church, Whitchurch
Photo: Gill Nethercroft

2. Acknowledgements

The people of Whitchurch and the surrounding area, working with the Healthcheck Co-ordinator, have produced this report.

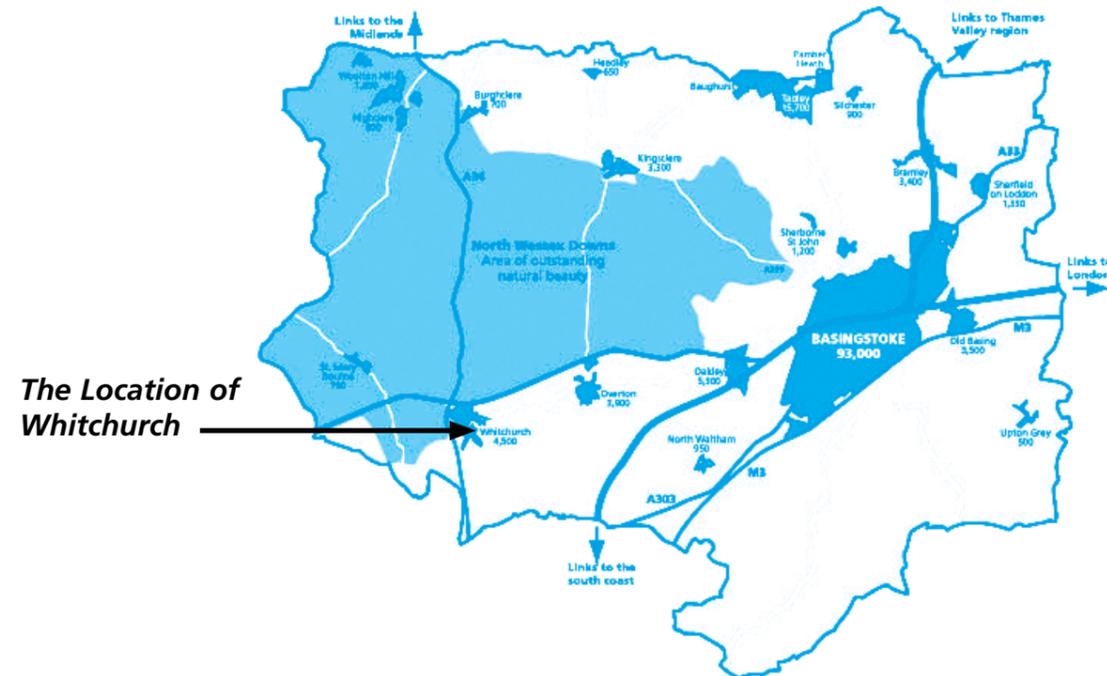
Special mention should go to those members of the Healthcheck Team and subsequently the Whitchurch Town Association (formed in November 2004) and especially those people who helped complete the Worksheets, for all their time and knowledge.

Mention must also be made of the Whitchurch Town Council Officers and Members, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, who all helped with the information gathering stage and gave their time and expertise to the Project. Thanks also to the Countryside Agency (now merged with SEEDA) who also helped through support and funding.

Thanks also to Tony Corbin, Susan Flawith, Gill Nethercroft and Janet Palmer for the various photographs provided that support the text of this report and to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for helping with the preparation and printing of this report.

3. Introduction

Whitchurch is a small, rural market town in the North West of Hampshire, with a population of around 4,800 people. The town is surrounded by beautiful countryside and has several sites for nature conservation within the town. The clear waters of the River Test flow through Whitchurch and turns the wheel at the Silk Mill, the town's unique tourist attraction. Whitchurch is in a Conservation Area and there are numerous Listed Buildings in the town.



Councillor Gill Nethercroft initiated the Whitchurch Healthcheck in September 2002. The stakeholders in the Healthcheck are The Countryside Agency, Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Whitchurch Town Council. Funding for the Project and the Project Co-ordinator came from the first three organisations, while Whitchurch Town Council gave their support in kind, by looking after the accounts, helping on various endeavours and offering room space.

The aim of the Healthcheck was to regenerate Whitchurch and the surrounding villages. This was achieved by involving the community in a series of public consultation events to ascertain what the residents felt were the key issues in the town. The Healthcheck Team worked through The Countryside Agency Market Towns Worksheets to highlight any issues pertinent to Whitchurch. All this work culminated in the Whitchurch Action Plan and Vision.

Please note that the Action Plan, snapshot, worksheets and project details are all working documents and are subject to change over time.

The information contained in this report was predominantly prepared during the latter half of 2004. The report was submitted at that time to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for their comment, review and endorsement. This endorsement came in the form of a statement from the Economic Overview Committee in March 2005 in which they confirmed their overall support for the aims and objectives of the report and the thoroughness and inclusiveness of the Healthcheck process.

The following significant progress has been made since the compilation of the report for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council approval.

1. Formation and launch of the Whitchurch Town Association (WTA) in November 2004.
2. The approval of plans for a new community hall and library (April 2005)
3. Agreement that an expanded Town Association will become a formally constituted body and with the support of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council additionally take on the responsibility for the new Community Centre.
4. Town Action Plan Project implementation that has already seen:
 - a. Local Economy – establishment of the Testbourne Business Club and bi-monthly free Business Advice Clinics.
 - b. Transport – In collaboration with Local Authorities and Whitchurch Town Council progress on Town Gateway signs, traffic calming and parking proposals plus in April 2005 completion of an extensive HGV movement survey along the length of the B3400 and adjoining roads.
 - c. Social/community – Whitchurch Town Association support to the Whitchurch Town Council led 'Chill to This' youth programme.
 - d. Environment – A start made on ideas to revitalise and improve the town centre.

Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is as accurate as possible but no responsibility is implied or taken for errors or omission.

4. The Whitchurch Healthcheck

Snapshot Report – August 2003

Background

Whitchurch is located within the North West Hampshire Parliamentary Constituency and the Basingstoke and Deane Borough of Hampshire. Basingstoke lies to the east, Newbury to the North, Andover and Salisbury to the West and Winchester to the South. It is about an hour by train to London's Waterloo Station. The M4 passes to the North and the M3 to the South with the A34 linking them.

Whitchurch is a town of about 4,800 people. Most of the centre of the town is included in a Conservation Area to preserve its special character and fine old buildings such as the Church of All Hallows, the Vicarage and Granary, the Baptist Church, the Town Hall, the White Hart Inn and the Silk Mill. Many of the residents have lived in Whitchurch for generations. Whitchurch is mentioned in a Charter of 909AD and the Domesday Survey of 1086.



Whitchurch Silk Mill
Photograph Gill Nethercott

Lord Denning (1899 –1999), former Master of the Rolls, was born and lived much of his life in Whitchurch. Richard Adams, the writer of Watership Down lives in the town.

There are engineering and printing factories on the Ardglen Industrial Estate in Whitchurch, with a firm producing and distributing watercress and salad products across the United Kingdom within easy reach of the town centre.

The Environment

Whitchurch is on the edge of the North Wessex Downs, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the town itself is a Conservation Area. There is one local nature reserve – the Millennium Meadow and two Sites of Special Scientific Interest, those being the River Test and Bere Hill Meadows. Along with the Meadows, Cowslip Bank and Clapper Copse are sites of importance for nature conservation. There are 73 Listed Buildings, among them the Town Hall and the Silk Mill. Hurstbourne Park is Listed Parkland. There are 37 footpaths, 2 bridleways and 5 byways open to all traffic. The Test Way is close by and there is a way marked cycle trail to the north of the town.

The Economy

As of September 1998, there were 1,300 jobs in Whitchurch. There are three job sectors in the town; agriculture, production and construction and other. The 2001 census showed that the unemployment rate was 2.2%. Over the period of 6 months up to July 2002, there were 17.6% unemployed. There are 70.33% economically-active residents, with 45.2% of those being professional employees.

There is a regular Friday market. There is one supermarket in the town over 1000 square metres. The Beehive, Tescos and the Spar are the only other convenience goods shops in the town and are the only shops to be compared with the supermarket. At the present time there are seven shops out of twenty-seven that are vacant. The only public toilets are situated off Bell Street. 21% of residents have post-school qualifications. There is one Primary school and one Secondary school in Whitchurch. There is no post-16 further education college in the town.

There is no Job Centre or Business Link office or a one-stop shop for business advice. There have been no new industrial units built in the past 6 years. An average rent for a 4,000 square foot industrial unit in good condition is around £550 per square foot. Although the market has dipped over the past 24 months, the rents on the Ardglen industrial estate have remained fairly static. The rent for a prime retail unit is estimated at £15 per square foot.



Newbury Street looking north from the square
Photograph: Tony Corbin

Social And Community

In the Indices of Deprivation of 2000, Whitchurch was 7,905 out of 8,414 English Wards, where 1 is the most deprived. January 2003 statistics put the population of Whitchurch as 4,814. Since 2001, the percentage of change in population is 18.3%. From the 2001 statistics, the percentage of the population over 60/65 was 20.8%, while the percentage of the population under 16 was 18.6%.

In August 2002, the number of households by tenure were the following:

Total households	1601
Owner occupied	1125
Private rented	148
Rented – Housing Association	328

From the 2001 Census, there were 28.2% of households comprising a single person and 14.3% of households with elderly people living alone. There are 3.0% houses without whole house heating.

As of March 2003 the average house prices in Whitchurch are as follows:

Detached	£356,963
Semi detached	£192,000
Terraced	£162,000
Flat	£83,847 (2001 Census figures)

The change in the average house price is 27%. 270 new homes have been built over the past 5 years, with 140 planned.

The recorded crime rates as of the 12 months to 31 March 2003 are as follows:

Violent	18
House burglary	15
Other burglary	14
Taking of vehicles	4
Theft from vehicles	28
Other theft	40
Fraud and forgery	4
Damage and arson	59
Drugs	2
Misc.	2
Total	186

There is one police station in Whitchurch, which is open between 9 and 10am and 5 and 7pm.

There is a Town Hall in Whitchurch, where the Registrar comes on Thursdays between 10.30 and 11.00am. The Citizens Advice Bureau is also based at the Town Hall on Tuesdays between 10.00am and 1.00pm.

There is one fire station, which is staffed by volunteers and one ambulance station.

There is one swimming pool in the town, which is based at the Secondary school. It is an outdoor pool, so has limited use. There is a small multi-gym also at the school.

There is one sports hall, based at the Secondary school. There are four outdoor sports pitches.

There is one Post Office in Whitchurch. There is one bank in Whitchurch, which is open three days a week and one building society. There are two cash points in the town. Whitchurch has a local solicitor, and two accountants are based in the town.

There is not a hospital in Whitchurch. The nearest A&E units are at Basingstoke and Winchester. There is a Minor Injuries Unit at Andover Hospital Trust. The nearest maternity facilities are at Andover, Basingstoke and Winchester. There is a doctor's practice, which is NHS and one dental practice, which has now closed its NHS list and is only available privately.

There are eight public houses in the town and one hotel. The White Hart Hotel has 20 bed spaces, 12 ensuite and there is one bed and breakfast establishment with 3 rooms, with 2 ensuite. There are six restaurants and cafes, including take-aways in the town. There is a theatre hall based at the Secondary school.

There are three public halls/community centres in the town. The Silk Mill is a weaving museum. Whitchurch has a small public library, which is open four days a week with limited opening hours. There are four churches for different denominations in Whitchurch and two churches in the nearby villages of Tufton and Litchfield.

There are three voluntary organisations in the town and 37 groups and clubs in Whitchurch and the surrounding area.

Hurstbourne Priors has a pub, a church, village hall and an equestrian centre.



Newbury Street, Whitchurch
Photo: Gill Nethercroft

There is one train station in Whitchurch, which is on the main line between Exeter and Waterloo.

There is one coach space at the Silk Mill car park.

As of August 2002, there were 22.24% households in Whitchurch without a car. There are roughly 25 short-stay car parking spaces and 88 long-stay car parking spaces in the town. There are two disabled car parking spaces in the town. There are no cycle paths.

From Whitchurch to Andover (nearest town), it takes 19 minutes by bus and 8 minutes by train. There are 5 bus routes that serve the town and the surrounding villages.

Sources

Office of National Statistics – Neighbourhood Statistics Census 2001

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Research and Information Department

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Business Support Centre

Hampshire County Council Research and Information Department

Whitchurch Design Statement Website

Baker Davidson Thomas, Basingstoke

Vail Williams, Basingstoke

Stratfords Commercial, Andover



*The White Hart Hotel
Photo: Susan Flawith*

The Team

The original ten members of the Healthcheck Team consisted of Borough and Town Councillors, the General Manager of the Whitchurch Silk Mill, the Community Centre Manager and local residents. There are sub groups for tourism and traffic/transport. A part time Healthcheck Co-ordinator was funded by The Countryside Agency, Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

Members of the current Whitchurch Town Association can be contacted via the Town Project Officer at Whitchurch Town Hall.



*Whitchurch Town Hall
Photo: Susan Flawith*

Community Involvement

Central to the Market Town Healthcheck is the involvement of the community. The aim of the Project was to get the residents of Whitchurch and its hinterland to 'have their say!'

Information Day – Saturday 6th September 2003

An Information Day was held at Whitchurch Silk Mill on Saturday 6th September 2003 to inform the people of Whitchurch and surrounding villages about the Healthcheck. There were posters giving information about the Healthcheck process and the benefits of it. A SWOT analysis was undertaken, with opportunities for people to write their comments on the flip charts and post it pads. Numerous local clubs and societies attended to publicise their organisations. In the afternoon, the local MP, Sir George Young, and the Mayor of Whitchurch, Cllr Barry Jackman, started the duck race for primary aged children and the boat race for secondary aged children on the River Test that flows through the grounds of the Silk Mill.

This event was followed up immediately by an OPEN HOUSE EVENT held at the empty office adjacent to Piper & Sons. This event was held for two weeks and was a continuation of 'spreading the word' about the Healthcheck and asking for peoples' opinions on Whitchurch.

A questionnaire was delivered through the Neighbourhood Watch Network to every household in the town and surrounding villages, asking peoples' opinion on a wide variety of issues, such as transport and traffic problems, leisure activities, the town and its residents, retail, housing and police coverage.

The Primary school, local shops, town hall, library, community centre and railway station agreed to have boxes to collect the results. The return rate was 17%, which is good for a questionnaire. The University of Gloucester village appraisals for Windows Software Package was used which is a questionnaire generation and analysis program for village, parish and community appraisals. It enables users to design their own questionnaire, undertake data entry and to analyse the appraisal results all within one programme.



The Square, Whitchurch
Photo: Susan Flawith

Summary of Questionnaire Results

(This incorporates the results from the Information Day and OPEN HOUSE EVENT)

The people of Whitchurch and the surrounding villages have had an opportunity to have their say on their town through public consultation events. A large cross section of people answered the questionnaire, the two largest groups being 25–44 and 45–59 age groups.

The car is the most popular method of travelling to the neighbouring towns. 71.9% of people felt that lorries were the biggest traffic problem and this was echoed by peoples' comments at the Information Day and Open House Event. Improvement methods like traffic calming and one-way traffic flow received the most support from people.

The majority of people who replied wanted to see the swimming pool covered. Just under half of the respondents felt that facilities for the elderly were average in the town; however, 36.6% of people thought that provision for youth in Whitchurch was below average, with 19.5% saying it was "abysmal". This is supported by comments made on the flip charts at the Information Day and Open House Event.

42.4% of people thought the town looked drab. On the whole, people thought the community in Whitchurch was friendly (67.1%), however many people thought that the community were apathetic, insular and dull (in descending order!). Most people get their information about events in Whitchurch from the Parish Magazine with 53.4% feeling that the amount of information available on what is going on in the town is reasonable.

70.3% of people feel that the police coverage of Whitchurch is poor and 83.9% would like a greater police presence in the town. 78% of people do not think that Whitchurch could accommodate any more new housing. 51.5% of people use the shops in Whitchurch on a weekly basis with 43.1% using them daily. 49.2% thought the range of shopping facilities in the town was reasonable. 61.4% shopped in Whitchurch to get 'last minute' items, while 81.3% shopped out of Whitchurch because there was more choice. There were a number of negative comments from the Information Day and Open House Event on the town centre appearance in general.

Detailed results are available in the appendices to the main report which can be obtained from the Town Project Officer at Whitchurch Town Hall.

A representative of the Healthcheck Team spoke about the project to the Hurstbourne Priors Parish Council and got their views and concerns to incorporate into the Healthcheck. The Town Project Officer attended the Community Lunches held every quarter by the Vicar of Whitchurch or his representative. These lunches were established by the Vicar so that community groups can come together and talk about what each group is doing and work together on suitable projects.

Open Day Event – Saturday 24 April 2004

The aim was to consolidate the public consultation process, with a display of proposed projects that had arisen from the comments, opinions and results from the Questionnaire. The aim of these projects was to improve the town and its facilities. People were asked to 'vote' by sticking a coloured dot to the project indicating whether they wanted to see that project go ahead or not. Various vision statements drawn up by the Healthcheck Team were on display, so that people could decide by coloured sticky dot, which one they thought was best for Whitchurch. .

Results From The Open Day

Project Name	Green Dot	Yellow Dot	Red Dot
Youth Project	40	2	-
Town Centre Projects	35	2	-
Reduce HGV Through Traffic	35	1	-
Tourism Projects	31	1	1
One Stop Shop Advice at Town Hall	30	2	-
Town Gateways	27	2	1
Community Bus	26	4	-
Local History Museum	23	1	1
IT Training Centre	19	7	-
Town Centre Manager	16	8	9
Anti Social Behaviour	19	1	1
Swimming Pool	15	1	1



Traffic Issues, London Road, Whitchurch
Photo: Janet Palmer

The Worksheets And Key Issues

The Worksheets were part of the Countryside Agency's Healthcheck Kit and they, together with the answers can be viewed by contacting the Town Project Officer at Whitchurch Town Hall.

The Worksheets were another way of finding out the issues concerning the town – the other way being public consultation. Below are the summaries of each of the four sections. As will be seen, the Worksheets help highlight the issues and help determine potential actions/ projects. The Healthcheck Team, with help from local clubs and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, completed the Worksheets. As the team was small it was decided to do them on an individual basis, some taking one, others three or four. A summary was drawn up for each of the four sections, listing issues and potential projects.

The key issues that came out of the Worksheets were echoed in the Public Consultation events. Lorries were seen to be the biggest traffic problem, people wanted to see the swimming pool covered, more provision for young people and if any new housing was to be built, it should be affordable housing. The town centre looked drab and the police coverage of Whitchurch was poor. The need for IT classes and more public internet access were identified, along with having consultation with local employers regarding their training needs. The need for business support, the identification of local meeting facilities and business incubation units were also highlighted. The tourism Worksheet highlighted the lack of facilities for visitors to Whitchurch.

The transport Worksheets highlighted the need for transport from the hamlet of Tufton. Therefore this need was incorporated into the parallel Community Bus Project, which looked at the route and timetable. Consequently the new route encompasses Tufton and the hamlets of Litchfield, Binley and Dunley and the village of Laverstoke.

As a result of doing the economic Worksheets, the lack of any small business forum in Whitchurch was identified. It was known that there were a lot of people running small businesses from their homes. The Healthcheck Team, together with the Town Council, initiated and organised the first two meetings of what has now emerged as the Whitchurch Small Business Forum, and subsequently became the Testbourne Business Club.

The key issues that arose from the Worksheets were put together with the results of the public consultation events. From this came the selection of potential projects that were further reviewed in terms of their feasibility. Those projects that were agreed to be realistic and achievable informed the Town Action Plan.

For further details on the projects, please see the Action Plan section of the Report.

5. The Town Action Plan

Introduction

The Action Plan was agreed as a result of public consultation within Whitchurch and its surrounding villages and was discussed and agreed by the Healthcheck Team. The Public Consultation consisted of an Information Day, Open House Event, Questionnaire and Open Day. The Healthcheck Team is made up of residents, Councillors (both Borough and Town), Community Centre Manager and General Manager of the Silk Mill. The Team met on a monthly basis to discuss issues arising from the Public Consultation and Worksheets, as well as following the stages of the process, as outlined in the Town Handbook. The Market Town Project Officer was the only paid member of the Team, under a contract basis with Hampshire County Council.

The Action Plan is currently being implemented by members of the Whitchurch Town Association. The Association was launched in November 2004 and like the Healthcheck Team comprises a mix of representatives from Local Authorities, Local Community Groups, Business and Residents. Sub-groups have since been formed to progress individual projects.

The Action Plan is a working document and subject to change over time. Every effort has been taken to ensure that information contained in this document is as accurate as possible but no responsibility is implied or taken for errors or omissions.

Links to Rural Strategy / Community Strategy / LSP

Rural Strategy

The Rural Strategy (adopted October 1999 with a reviewed action plan adopted in early 2004) has been developed in order to assist the Council and other organisations in maintaining and, where possible, improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough's rural area.

The Strategy's action plan promotes and supports the development of village/parish plans and town healthchecks as they enable local communities to have greater say in their own affairs and create a vision of their own towns and villages which address the needs of the entire community. The Council's support for the development of an Action Plan for Whitchurch was illustrated through the provision of a sizeable grant to assist with the completion of the work.

The objectives of the Strategy, which link in with the Whitchurch Action Plan, include:

- T1 - To support and promote the provision of improved and affordable public transport services.
- T2 - To minimise the dangers, and other adverse impacts, of traffic on the rural population.
- S1 - To maximise the range and viability of facilities and services available to rural residents.
- EC1 - To improve the availability of advice, training, information and support for businesses and farmers and to harness the potential benefits of information technology.

Links to LSP and the Community Strategy

The LSP in Basingstoke and Deane is made up of the various strategic partnerships in the Borough, these come together under the LSP Board to support the delivery of the Community Strategy. The role of the LSP Board is to develop the capacity for partnership working in the Borough and to co-ordinate the activities of the strategic partnerships.

The Whitchurch Healthcheck Team is one of the many partnerships active in the Borough. The vision for Whitchurch reflects many parts of the Community Strategy for Basingstoke and Deane and shows how aspirations for the Borough might be delivered at a local level. Finding ways to voice the aspirations of local people, and deliver services appropriate to their needs, is a key part of building capacity for partnership working. The Healthcheck Team / Town Association in Whitchurch is providing an excellent example of how to take this forward.

The Vision

The Vision, shown below, was chosen by the people of Whitchurch as the statement that best describes the Whitchurch they would like to see in ten years time at the Healthcheck Open Day on 24 April 2004. On display were five statements to choose from. The Healthcheck Team put the various statements together, after looking carefully at the results of the Public Consultation events and the Market Towns Worksheets. The team went through a call out session, coming up with words and phrases that they felt reflected the issues that the people of Whitchurch felt strongly about. These words and phrases were then taken away by various team members and shaped into vision statements.

The Vision for Whitchurch

"Whitchurch aims to have a welcoming and attractive town square, be economically and socially self sufficient and to satisfy the needs of all ages of residents. This can be achieved by residents having a feeling of pride in Whitchurch; having fewer lorry movements, thereby making the town more pedestrian friendly and safer; more activities for the youth; making sure that development does not outstrip the facilities and acting as a support to the hinterland."

Strategic Objectives

The objectives of the Action Plan are:

Economic

To strengthen Whitchurch's economic base by:

- Reviving the commercial hub of the Market Square.
- Appointing a Town Business Manager.
- Supporting local traders and businesses through the Small Business Forum and the Ardglen Business Forum.
- Encouraging the development of further retail outlets wherever an opportunity occurs within the town centre to improve the critical shopping core.
- Enhancing the tourist potential of the town.
- Providing tourist information, art/craft gallery and local history museum in the centre of the town.

Transport

- To introduce measures to decrease the amount of heavy through traffic and supporting the community bus scheme.
- Introduce distinctive 'gateway' signage to be integrated with the planned traffic management measures for the Town.

Social and Community

- Encourage participation in the Hampshire Food Fare and organise other attractions and events.
- Support the provision of youth activities in the town.
- Support the provision of and improved access to core services within the town.
- Support the provision of improved sports facilities in the town.

Environment

Change the perceived drab image of the town by restoring:

- The historic appearance of buildings within the town centre.
- Consider participation in the Britain in Bloom competition.

Existing / Parallel Projects

Community Bus

The aim is to reorganise the route and timetable and change the day from Thursday to Friday to coincide with the Country Market, Library opening days and special meals for OAPs at the local Hotel and pubs. Healthcheck help will be needed with providing information and promotion. This links with Rural Strategy Objective T1.

One Stop Shop Service at the Town Hall

The Citizens Advice Bureau successfully uses the Town Hall for a 'surgery' one morning a week. The Town Clerk would like to build on this with other organisations, using the Town Hall as an outreach centre one morning a week. Relate have expressed an interest and Sir George Young MP has offered to hold a regular surgery. Other suitable organisations could be drug counselling and Andover Carers.

The aim of this project would be to improve the facilities in the Town Hall for the organisations, such as telephone/ internet point and heating. Healthcheck help will be needed with funding. This links with Rural Strategy Objective S1.

These projects are coordinated by the Town Clerk on behalf of Whitchurch Town Council.

Town Action Plan

Projects

The following projects are being implemented by the Whitchurch Town Association. The timescale definitions used are:

Short Term	Up to 18 months
Medium Term	Up to 3 years
Long Term	Up to 5 years

Project Title: Youth Project

Term Short / Medium

Introduction

From the public consultation events, the need for a Youth Project was identified. At present there is no Youth Group for the 11–14 age group. A Youth Group for this age group needs to be set up with a Youth Worker. In conjunction with this, the need for the Youth Suite to be updated was identified. Various Youth Groups use this facility and a new kitchen, storage and curtains are needed.

Goal

A Youth Group for the 11–14 age group with a Youth Worker to organise it. The Youth Suite to be updated and refurbished.

Objectives

To find out what sort of 'club' this age group want.
To set out what work needs to be done in the Youth Suite.

Scope

The project will only be involved with the 11–14 age group and refurbishing the Youth Suite.

Approach

Detailed plans will be produced for the Youth Suite;

- what needs to be replaced in the kitchen.
- where are the new storage areas to be located.
- how many curtains are needed?

Identify what the young people in the 11-14 age group want to do/have available. Recruit a Youth Worker.

Constraints/Dependencies

No resources available for a youth worker.
Activities on offer do not appeal to 11–14 age group.

Risk

- Building regulations / planning / health and safety Issues encountered.
- Promised funding does not materialise, therefore Youth Group does not get off the ground and youth suite does not get refurbished. Alternative youth activities / initiatives may then need to be encouraged or pursued.

Deliverables

A youth group for the 11–14 age group. A refurbished Youth Suite.

Estimated Resource

Need funding for a Youth Worker. Need funding for refurbishment of Youth Suite (£15,000 approx). This is seen as a short/medium term project.

Project Title: Tourism Initiatives

Term Short / Medium Term

Introduction

From the Market Towns Tourism and Visitor Services Worksheet, the need was identified for some form of Tourist Information Centre and a town guide and map. Issues that also arose from the Worksheet were that apart from the Silk Mill, there were no other activities for visitors to the town. Therefore a Heritage Trail and Nature Trail were proposed, together with the Circular Walks leaflet that is already available, but which needs to be promoted and made more widely available.

Goal

To encourage visitors to come to Whitchurch and spend more time in our Town, by having more tourist activities for visitors to do.

Objectives

To encourage more visitors to Whitchurch.
Bring more revenue to Whitchurch.

Scope

Keeping the proposed tourism projects to four, as we feel these are manageable and feasible.

Approach

The Healthcheck Team will be working with local Clubs and Societies to produce the Heritage Trail, Nature Trail and Town Guide.

Constraints / Dependencies

This project depends on the cooperation and goodwill of team members and members of local Clubs and Societies to produce the Trails and Guide.

Risks

Insufficient funding for all deliverables.

Deliverables

A Heritage Trail and Nature Trail for visitors. An up to date Town Guide and Map.

Estimated Resources

The work to produce the Trails and Town Guide will be voluntary.

Publishing costs are expected to be met by contributions from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for the Heritage. The Town Guide and map funding will need to be finalised and sources identified. This is seen as a short / medium term project.

Project Title: IT Training Centre

Term Medium

Introduction

From the Training and Education Worksheet, it was identified that there was a need for IT classes to be run for the public and also to work with local employers in the town on their training needs. Currently the Community Centre has to borrow laptops from a College 7 miles away. At present, there is only one public internet access point located in the Library, whose opening hours are limited. This links with Rural Strategy Objective EC1.

Goal

To have an IT Training Centre in Whitchurch with a variety of IT courses and Internet Access for the public, to be housed in the new Community Centre.

Objectives

To ensure that the project is suitably resourced. To work with the Community Centre and Library Services. To establish the type of courses that would be successful.

To plan publicity and promotion.

Scope

To ensure that there are a suitable number of computers available and that there is an IT programme drawn up, which ensures that teachers are available to deliver the courses.

Constraints/Dependencies

The building of the Community Centre gets delayed. Lack of computers, teachers and pupils.

Risks

Lack of cooperation between the different groups involved, which means that the project does not go ahead.

Deliverables

An IT centre teaching IT courses to the residents of Whitchurch and the surrounding villages, and local businesses.

Estimated Resources

Need for computer workstations.

Need for staff – to run the courses and to organise them.

This is seen as a medium term project.

Project Title: Local History Museum

Term Medium / Long

Introduction

Whitchurch is a very old historic town with a wealth of artefacts and material. It was identified by the Culture and Heritage Worksheet that there was a need for a museum. Many schools use Whitchurch for field trips, however there is no town museum where school children, the general public and visitors can go to find out more about the history of the town.

Goal

To have a local history Museum in Whitchurch, with changing historical displays.

Objectives

To have the use of a building where the wealth of material on the history of Whitchurch can be displayed for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

To be another tourist attraction in Whitchurch.

Scope

The scope of this project is to find a suitable building and with the help of the Local History Society and other local groups, display the history of the town.

Approach

The first stage is to see whether there is room in the new Community Centre.

The second stage would be to work with the Local History Society and other local groups to collect material for the Museum.

Constraints/Dependencies

The new Community Centre proves unsuitable. The Museum is also dependent on people donating artefacts to the Museum.

Risks

As above.

Deliverables

A Local Museum / Discovery Centre displaying the history of the town for all to visit.

Estimated Resources

This is seen as a medium / long term project.

Project Title: Town Gateways

Term Medium

Introduction

From the Transport and Tourism and Visitor Services Worksheets, the need for signage that is able to reflect the town's history and uniqueness and to welcome people into the town was identified. Another aim was that having unique signage at the town's gateways has a positive effect on the reduction in speed of traffic entering the town.

Goal

To have unique and distinctive signage at the town's gateways.

Objectives

The signage should:

- reflect the town's history
- reflect the town's environment
- be unique to Whitchurch.

Scope

The project deals only with the creation of signs at the gateways to Whitchurch.

Approach

This project now has the backing of both the County and Borough Highways Departments.

There is the need to have a design that fulfils the criteria as laid out above but is also acceptable to the residents of Whitchurch, eg. a competition.

Identify and assess the costs of the project and identify funding.

Constraints/Dependencies

Getting authorisation to change the existing signs for unique signage. Obtaining funding.

Risk

The County and Borough Highways Departments may be negative about the project and refuse to support the project.

Deliverables

To have unique and distinctive signage at the four main gateways into Whitchurch.

Estimated Resources

Need funding for signage. (£10,000+ approx.)

This is seen as a medium term project.

Project Title: Reduction of HGV through Traffic

Term Medium

Introduction

From the Healthcheck Public Consultation events, lorry traffic was seen as a major issue affecting residents of the town. This was also identified in the Transport Worksheets. Many of the town's roads are narrow and the lorries are now very long, articulated and wide, causing congestion in the town. The Atkins survey of 2002 showed that 42% of lorries were using the town as a short cut. This project links with Rural Strategy Objective T2 and Basingstoke Environmental Strategy for Transport Components 'Roads and Traffic' and 'Freight Movement.'

Goal

To reduce HGV through traffic, specifically those lorries over 38 tons.

Objectives

To work with the Borough and County Highways Departments and other agencies in having signage on approach roads to Whitchurch denoting that the roads are narrow and cannot take the weight of these large vehicles.

Scope

The project will target those vehicles that are using Whitchurch as a through route to their final destination as opposed to those vehicles who are delivering to an address within the town.

Approach

Meetings will be held with the relevant Highways Departments and any other agencies to ascertain what we can and cannot do. At the moment the project denotes signage but this could be expanded to include other measures such as rumble strips or mini roundabouts. In April 2005 an extensive survey of HGV movements is planned in conjunction with Hampshire County Council.

Constraints/Dependencies

This project is dependent on the relevant Highways Departments and the support of Councillors and residents.

Risks

The Highways Departments are not able to help in any way.

Deliverables

The reduction of HGV through traffic will make the town a safer place to walk and cycle and improve the quality of life for the residents of Whitchurch. Will assist in the success of the Town Centre Project.

Estimated Resources

Funding is needed for appropriate signage to be erected. This is seen to be a medium term project.

Project Title: Town Centre Project

Term Medium / Long Term

Introduction

From the Public Consultation events held by the Healthcheck Team, the town centre was identified as being 'drab' (42.2% of those who completed the questionnaire.) The Retail and Town Centre Services Worksheet confirmed this view. The deteriorating appearance of some of the empty shops detracts from the town's image. The quality of the town centre is paramount to the image and vitality of the town.

Goal

To improve the appearance of the town centre and tackle visual blight.

Objectives

The enhancement of the town centre will benefit the community, businesses and visitors.

Scope

This project will deal with the town centre only.

Approach

With the help of the Borough Conservation Officers, we plan to encourage the restoration of buildings and identify funding opportunities to the landlords of buildings in the town centre, using the Whitchurch Design Statement as a key tool.

Constraints/Dependencies

Lack of cooperation from landlords.

Risk

The landlords do not want to get involved with the project.

Deliverables

Visual and material improvement of the town centre.

Estimated Resources

This is seen to be a medium to long term project.

Project Title: **Town Business Development**

Term Medium / Long

Introduction

The need for a focus in Whitchurch has been highlighted by the Healthcheck Project, in particular within the Commercial and Industrial Property Needs and the Business Support Worksheets. A town manager is envisaged who will work with local businesses to promote and support business start ups, right through to retail and the industrial estate. The need is for someone to maintain and improve the economic viability of the town for all users by acting as a co-ordinator and catalyst and encouraging co-operation between key stakeholders, users and service providers. This links with Rural Strategy Objective EC1.

Goal

Establish local business support initiatives, for example advice clinics, business clubs.
To have a part time Town Business Manager.

Objectives

See Introduction above.

Approach

Constraints/Dependencies

The need for funding for such a post and for how many years.

Risks

No funding.
No one applies for the job.

Deliverables

Short term – utilization of a Town Project Officer.
Longer term – recruitment and funding for a town manager who will work with local businesses and maintain and improve the economic viability of the town for all users by acting as a coordinator and catalyst and encouraging co-operation between key stakeholders, users and service providers.

Estimated Resources

Need for a serviced office with computer facilities (start up business support).
This is seen as a medium long term project.

Issues for Implementation

The Healthcheck Team

The implementation phase of the Healthcheck project will re-energise the Whitchurch Town Association to legalise its structure. This factor, together with the risk of experienced members dropping out for various reasons could be an issue for the continuity of the project. The present members of the Team have proved to be an effective and hardworking body, who have given up their time on a voluntary basis, because they want to do something for their community of Whitchurch. Therefore, it is imperative that we have continuity and that everyone is clear about their responsibilities in the new legalised framework.

Staff Resources

With one part time member of staff it is important that the Action Plan maintains a realistic work programme. This programme should clearly identify what areas of work can be undertaken by volunteers, local councils and other agencies. Also, timescales and outputs need to be clearly identified. The Team should review the work of the member of staff on a regular basis.

Community Involvement

The need to keep the Community informed and involved is paramount. There is a danger of the Community becoming disenchanted about the Healthcheck process if there is little evidence of results from the Action Plan. Regular publicity and some 'quick wins' are needed to show that the process is working and producing tangible results.

A small communications sub-group was formed in January 2005 with the sole purpose of achieving the required awareness level through avenues such as a quarterly community magazine and website in conjunction with the publishers of the existing town medians the Whitchurch Eye and the Parish Magazine.

Funding

It will be necessary for the staff member to look into the feasibility of projects as ideas are mooted. Research into potential funding of proposed projects will be necessary as the Action Plan is adapted and changed in later years.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Reporting

The aim is to report back regularly to the Town Council, Borough and County on project progress irrespective as to whether funds have been raised to support the projects. Support from all local clubs, organisations and societies will also actively be sought. Progress will also be reported to the public, using the local paper, Parish Magazine and the Whitchurch Eye.

Evaluation

The Healthcheck Team will evaluate the Action Plan on a regular basis and identify any problems and propose actions to address them as necessary.

Review

The Action Plan will be reviewed regularly and new projects will be introduced, as and when is appropriate, by the Whitchurch Town Association Town Action Plan Team.

6, Additional Information *(available from Whitchurch Town Hall)*

1. Public Consultation Documents

Results from Information Day Questionnaire and Open Day

2. Worksheets

Environment
Social and Community
Economic
Transport

3. Other

Bus and Train Timetable, Community Bus Timetable

