

1. INTRODUCTION

The last report that looked at Bruton and its future was published 10 years ago. It made many useful recommendations, and a large number of the issues which it raised appear again in this report. No doubt a report which might have been produced in Medieval times would also have been concerned with such things as crime, housing and employment. What changes is not so much the broad social, economic and environmental issues which affect the life of any community, but their current and future content, their application and their priority. It is these concerns that we have sought to identify and address.

In preparing and writing this report we have been guided by three principal considerations. Firstly, Bruton like all small rural communities faces the inevitability of change. The difference between the then and now, is the increasing pace of this evolution: some older residents might call it revolution. To condemn change per se is to ignore the benefits it can bring and the increasingly complex needs and aspirations of our modern lifestyles. Fewer shops, less local employment, remote policemen, unprofitable 'old' enterprises and increasing traffic is one side of the story. The other side is of a community relatively more prosperous than its predecessors, and enriched by new opportunities for learning, sport, leisure, health and social care, and opportunities for travel. However, while welcoming change the danger is that we also lose those core values which make Bruton such an attractive place to live. Our report is therefore concerned with how the town might best evolve over the next 10 or more years.

Our second consideration has been to look at Bruton as a community, rather than a place. Buildings can be adapted and developed, and services adjusted and extended but the reason for doing so will be to provide for a growing population, very different in their expectations to those of, say, only 25 years ago. Whereas for most of the last century you might find many different generations of Brutonians born, educated, employed and retired in the area this, with exceptions, is far less likely now. Families move to where there are opportunities for work, education and housing, thus threatening the viability of a small community. Families arriving in the town are often now transitory, and stability is increasingly likely to reside in the early retired newcomers. The thread of continuity has become weaker. Thus our report is also concerned with the challenges of a developing community and its growing expectations.

Thirdly, we have looked outside the boundaries of Bruton, to those resources upon which we all depend, and how we can encourage those who control them to support us in an efficient and beneficial way. Examples of this are public transport, project development and funding, District and County services and policing. Life and its infrastructure is increasingly complex while decision-making becomes more remote. Those communities which do not or cannot adapt and influence decisions made on their behalf will lose out to those who can and do.

Lastly, we welcome a new initiative by the Chairman of the Town Council, who has formed an ad hoc committee to look at how particular improvements can be introduced in Bruton and how this report can be taken forward.

We believe Bruton should be a town jealous of its past but ambitious for its future; a town that welcomes change and seizes opportunities but at the same time is also caring and responsible; and a community that is confident and united. We hope this report will help Bruton towards such a future.

***Members of the Committee,
serving for all or part of the year:***

Tim Bates
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May 2005

2. A CONCERNED COMMUNITY

Maintaining and Enhancing the Character, Quality and Diversity of the Built and Natural Environment

Most of us, as our questionnaire confirmed, regard the quality of our environment as very important. It contributes significantly to the enjoyment of our lives and, at best, can enrich and stimulate us, provide for many of our needs, and encourage pride and responsibility in our community. Paradoxically, the greatest threat to our environment can be ourselves - the way we choose to lead our lives and often our lack of understanding and awareness of the fragility of much of what we value.

To this must be added those threats beyond our control - increasing pressure on our natural resources, global warming and pollution, and decisions taken in far away places by those without local knowledge. It is therefore important that we are able to recognize environmental priorities, identify opportunities and threats, agree any necessary action, and then be prepared to influence or implement change. Such action clearly involves our own Council but it also requires commitment from the whole community.

2.1 Planning

Until recently, planning was principally concerned with allocation of land use. However, central Government has decided that what is more important is spatial planning, i.e. the use of land taking into account social, economic and physical requirements. This, when combined with strategy for such things as transport, employment and housing, will provide opportunities for more coordinated planning and local input. The Government has emphasized the value of community involvement in formulating local planning policy, and this Report can be seen as part of that process.

2.2.1 The Planning System

There have been a number of changes over the past decade as to how planning is carried out. Legislation in 1991 required a move away from regularly updated local area plans, to a single plan covering the whole District.

However, in 2000 the Government decided that instead of spreading development around a number of settlements it should be concentrated in existing urban centres, such as Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne and Wincanton. This required a re-write of the current local plan for the District and it is this plan that is currently under discussion. Later this year it is likely to be adopted as the formal development plan for South Somerset.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new development planning system to be called the Local Development Framework, which will have to conform to a Regional Spatial Strategy. That Strategy is likely to further restrict development growth to a limited number of regionally significant centres such as Taunton and Yeovil.

We are now in a transitional period between these two planning exercises, with 2007 as the target for implementation of the new policy and plan. The possible danger of this very centralized development policy is that sustainability in small communities such as Bruton could become more difficult.

- *The new approach of encouraging community-led planning is an opportunity we need to take full advantage of. Local input is set to have much more influence than previously, and we need to debate and agree a viable planning policy for the town.*
- *Our town planning must take into account wider policies and issues, and strategic planning at District and County level. This requires a knowledge and an understanding of current planning matters.*

2.2.2 Consultation

Planning decisions which affect people's lives are bound to be controversial to some if not many in the community. Consultation brings the benefit of greater understanding of the issues involved, and in consequence the likelihood of planning decisions being more readily accepted and understood.

- *Sometimes the opposite of timely and relevant information openly presented is gossip and rumour with prejudice and uninformed judgment to follow. The community should be able to discuss and have their views heard on major environmental issues such as new housing development and plans for a new surgery. Some ways to achieve this are public meetings, a limited and targeted questionnaire, use of the Town News, and deposit of maps, plans and papers in the Library. We believe that residents should be encouraged to participate in the wider decision making process, rather than only in matters directly affecting them.*
- *The Community's response to major issues should, where appropriate, be Town Council policy, unless there are good reasons for not doing so, e.g. technical, legal or policy matters are overriding.*
- *Most local councils give priority to 'quick fix' solutions for contentious or emotive environmental issues. It is understandable that success should be seen as achieving quick results. This, though, can work against the best interests of the town when longer term policies are needed to address longer term issues. Two examples might be repeated minor work to shore up an outdated road system, rather than addressing the need for a new and comprehensive overall plan; and continuous minor repairs to facilities where replacement might be a more economical and beneficial solution..*

2.3 The Natural Environment

Landscape that offers beauty, peace and access will become increasingly valuable in our lives. Equally, we need to protect and encourage biodiversity as a valuable but threatened resource.

2.3.1 Approaches to the Town

The town's oddly shaped boundary results from Parish history and geography.

- *Our neighbouring parishes are important to us. Some abut closely to the centre of the town and all use Bruton for shopping, travel, healthcare and education. Our common interests suggest we would benefit from closer liaison concerning environmental issues.*
- *Our town boundary markers are our roadside 'Bruton' signs. Their presentation says something about us to our many visitors. Their upgrading should be regularly reviewed, with particular emphasis on graphic design and with anti-graffiti coating.*

2.3.2 Abbey Park and the Dovecote

Both these sites are of great importance to the town. The former is an exciting new opportunity and the latter our most prominent heritage site and symbol of the town. We should exploit both sites.

- *There is inadequate signing to the Dovecote and now also Abbey Park, either approaching it by car or on foot. It is disappointing that the National Trust, as owners of the Dovecote, do so little to enhance this site.*
- *Would it be possible to illuminate the Dovecote on high days and holidays?*
- *The development of Abbey Park is an exciting project. To make the most of this site as a nature reserve and as part of the town's heritage, we should erect explanatory boards for visitors- what wildlife and plants can be seen, what was its use and how might Bruton have appeared in medieval times looking down from the height of the park? An excellent precedent can be seen at Stonehenge and atop Glastonbury Tor. We believe there are already plans for literature and further research.*

2.3.3 Jubilee Park

The generosity of the Visitors of Sexey's Hospital has allowed this land to be used for recreational purposes for the benefit of the town. In fact, it is currently our only facility for key outdoor sports.

- *Maintenance of the Park and its sports pitches is currently met exclusively from Town Council funds. The agreement which prohibits charging for use of the Park's facilities should be re-negotiated with the landowners. Modest charges for users would seem equitable and would generate funds for upkeep of the park and stimulate self-help.*

- *The playground and car park are a valuable amenity. Regrettably their isolation attracts vandals. Those bent on mischief will be difficult to restrain but better lighting and security would help, as would visits from the police and PCSO. Improvements to the Pavilion and any new equipment should take into account its risk from vandalism.*
- *We need to stop the riding of scramble and quad bikes over our parks, including the football pitch. Not only is it causing great damage but is threatening the enjoyment of these places for recreation and sport.*
- *Planned further tree planting should be implemented as soon as possible, with the emphasis on native species.*

2.3.4 River Brue

The river running through the town is in some respects visually disappointing, being hidden for much of its progress, and often despoiled by litter.

- *Like most comparatively slow flowing rivers regular maintenance of the bed is needed to reduce unsightly growth.*
- *We believe that the recently reopened view of the river along Riverside Walk is to be welcomed, and should be maintained as such, and plans for its management and enhancement explained.*
- *Litter and rubbish in the river is an eyesore.*

2.3.5 Planting, Greening and Screening

We tend to take for granted much of the 'greenery' around Bruton, but of course most of it is the result of intervention rather than natural regeneration.

- *It is difficult to make a comprehensive plan for maintaining and improving the 'greenness' of the town, because of the breadth of responsibilities, ranging from private property owners to the District Council. The schools are among the most considerate landscapers and arboriculturists, and also many residents maintain superb gardens. We should encourage private landowners in this respect.*
- *It would encourage and promote best practice if we could have a Bruton open gardens weekend. This could also benefit a town fund for planting and trees.*
- *The Horticultural Society might be willing to compile a Survey and make recommendations for improving the town's soft landscaping.*
- *Our open spaces should be clean, safe and green. If they are well maintained and attractive they will in turn encourage use, pride and responsibility.*

2.3.6. Walks, Bridleways and Paths

We are lucky in having a wide choice of rights-of-way for recreation. We need to provide and encourage their use, although maintenance will always be a problem.

- *The leaflets series of Walks Around Bruton are excellent and deserve greater publicity. The second series should usefully be completed and published as soon as possible.*
- *A leaflet is needed showing cycle routes, including our link with the National Byway and the South Somerset Cycle Route.*
- *Signing of footpaths and bridleways is adequate rather than great. Routes to Abbey Park will require signing. The Countryside Code would usefully be displayed where paths cross farmland.*
- *A large scale map of walks and cycle routes in and around the town could be displayed in the passage outside the Community Office and a reduced scale version offered for sale.*
- *Maintenance of footpaths and bridleways should probably be aimed more at cutting back growth than improving surfaces. Too much of the latter is expensive and takes away much of the character of the rural path.*
- *We should make maximum use of the Community Access Fund to help improve access to our public rights-of-way.*

2.4 The Built Environment

Our built environment is manmade, connecting us to our history and our future. Its value is that it identifies the town, with its particular characteristics and distinctiveness, while providing us with a means of living and working in a sustainable and pleasant environment.

2.4.1 Heritage

We are lucky in Bruton to be surrounded by buildings that collectively provide us with an exceptional heritage. However, the cost of protecting and maintaining this heritage is a continuing burden. We need to try to strike a balance between important issues, such as irretrievable damage to, or even loss, of, key buildings, and accepting the adaptation to new use or replacement of lesser value buildings to meet modern needs.

- *We need to make a formal appraisal of our heritage. Until we have compiled a listing of all the town's historically and architecturally important features - buildings, monuments and walls - we cannot ascertain and prioritise the support and protection they require. This is an exercise which Bruton Trust might agree to undertake, with possible support from English Heritage.*
- *The planning system acts as a safeguard to our Grade I and II buildings. There are, though, many other unlisted buildings which, because of either their own intrinsic value or because they are situated adjacent to a key building or site,*

need special consideration, when alteration, change of use or demolition is being sought. Equally, insensitive siting or poor design of new infill buildings can have unwelcome consequences for our heritage. This is an aspect of planning more easily identified at local rather than district level.

- *There are key heritage potential development sites in the town that should be recognised as such and carefully watched. Durslade Farm is a prime example.*
- *Bruton's schools have an important role to play in the conservation of our heritage, and any future developments which might affect it. They should be included in an Appraisal, and in our concern over the impact of alterations and new build on the town's greater heritage.*

2.4.2 High Street

The centre of Bruton is clearly important to our historic built environment, but is subject to threats we find difficult to control. Traffic, pollution, change of use, costs of maintenance, suitability for modern living are all challenges in that we cannot wish such problems away.

- *We need, with expert advice, to draw up a comprehensive plan for improving the High Street. A piecemeal and unco-ordinated approach is not satisfactory. A traffic management plan, including pinch points and ramps to slow and discourage traffic, new pavements and dropped kerb crossings, improved signing, possibly better lighting, and roadway resurfacing should all be part of a major redesign and refurbishment exercise aimed at enhancing the street while safeguarding its heritage. Residents, shopowners, schools, Sexey's Hospital and others should be consulted as stakeholders in improving this street.*
- *The painting guide for facades on the High Street might usefully be updated, and promoted.*
- *The maintenance of the buildings on the High Street is principally dependent on the civic pride of their owners. Most buildings are well maintained. Those that do need attention are often lacking funds and we must make use of help and support from outside sources, such as Regeneration Budget funding.*
- *Change of use can be a double-edged weapon. Once lost to retail use a building is unlikely to revert to it later, thus adding to the reduction of the number of shops. However, change of use can often save a building at risk and may ensure its future maintenance. It is a difficult planning decision, but we would urge exhaustive enquiries before sanctioning a change of use.*
- *While having great sympathy for the residents of numbers 46 and 48, the historic fencing off of the pavement in front of these houses does present a potential danger to pedestrians.*
- *The habit of placing bins and stock on the already narrow pavement should be discouraged.*

2.4.3 Development

An increasing population and the need to provide local employment are the drivers of development. We need to accept our share of new development, but at the same time control its impact.

- *Just as an appraisal of our heritage is required, we also need a Design Statement. This is a recognized planning guide encouraging developers to take into account particular characteristics such as architectural design and materials which are part of the character of the town. It is a particularly useful when considering new-build planning applications and is a powerful tool in the planning process.*
- *We should be imaginative in welcoming development which offers new employment opportunities. New low scale but hi-tech enterprises provide the possibility for innovative but sympathetic design. Provender Mill is a successful example of adaptation, but new buildings could be equally exciting and welcoming to new businesses.*
- *New development is to many, particularly those most affected visually or by increased pressure on adjacent services, a threat. If possible, the community needs to know about planned development when explanation can do much to ease acceptance.*

2.4.4 Housing

Housing development can be a contentious issue. It need not be so if its impact on the community is well planned, well publicized and well executed.

- *About 70 new houses are scheduled to be built to the east of the Frome road, between the cemetery and existing housing, in or around 2007. The exact date depends on the release of the land for development to meet South Somerset housing targets.*
- *It is important that the design, mix and layout of this housing is aligned to the Town's needs. Affordable housing should form up to 35% of this development, as set out in current guidelines, and a proportion be suitable for single accommodation. Density and layout should take into account the need for off-road parking. The design and minimum build quality should take as its example the Tolbury Mill site. At every stage local planning scrutiny and consultation will be critical to the success of this development.*
- *New guidelines place an obligation on developers to provide on or off site recreation facilities or contribute to other town sporting or recreational facilities. This is called planning gain. There are potentially a number of projects that might qualify for such support.*

- *The impact of this new development on the town's social, economic, educational, employment, traffic and physical infrastructure needs consideration if integration is to be smoothly achieved.*
- *Infill housing and extension and adaptation of existing housing stock is, if properly planned and executed, a benefit to the town. It needs careful and sympathetic monitoring.*

2.4.5 Commercial Sites

Bruton needs employment, and that requires work premises. The possible consequential impact can create problems, such as traffic, noise, smell, and light pollution, all of which needs to be taken into consideration at the planning stage.

- *Our existing 'business park' is generally well sited, although there is some nuisance to adjacent houses. This is for light industrial use. What we lack is workspace for small craft or service use. There seems little reason why we should not welcome such units provided there is an established demand and if we can find a suitable site.*
- *The town is particularly suited to welcoming small office or professional users. We have good transport links and access, the necessary services and suitable buildings. This might be the subject of a promotional exercise, by both the Town and District Council.*

2.4.6 Schools

Our many schools are so central to our life and so enmeshed with the town, that they carry an importance to us quite apart from their educational excellence.

- *There has in the past sometimes been poor liaison between the schools and the town. This has recently begun to change for the benefit of both, for we have much to gain from a healthy relationship with each other. Joint involvement in planning issues is an example where we need to cooperate and coordinate much more. To this end we hope there may be an opportunity for agreement on land use by the railway station.*
- *School support for community projects has often been extremely generous, typically our use of Abbey Park. It should be possible for us to look jointly at each other's planned requirements, such as the move of the Steiner school, and agree a solution that satisfies all parties and which we can work towards jointly.*
- *There is a need for a 'safe' route for children, and others, leading from the east of the town to the Primary School. Such a path might run to the north of Burrowfield and Uphills, with crossings on Frome Road and Coombe Street.*

2.5 Green Issues

Population growth, increased use of finite natural resources, changes in land management, the growing volume and toxicity of our waste, pollution and climate change all threaten our traditional environment. To combat this and at least preserve but better enhance our environment we all need to raise our awareness and responsibility. Bruton is at risk as much as anywhere else.

2.5.1 Wildlife and Conservation

We need to identify opportunities, and provide protection and sustainability for wildlife and nature.

- *It would be valuable for Bruton to make an appraisal of our natural resources - wildlife, land and its uses, water, woodland, minerals, etc. This could be an exciting and interesting school project, encouraging understanding as well as a valuable record.*
- *We should be cautious of allowing development which destroys existing green landscape or natural resources, for example, removal of hedges and trees and greenfield building sites.*
- *Biodiversity, the best use of and integration of a chain of natural resources, should be part of any planning in Bruton. This needs a partnership approach, of which plans for Abbey Park are a good example.*
- *Economically viable farming is likely to move from intensive land use to gain maximum subsidy, towards the best use of land to support landscape and wildlife habitats. There should be a dialogue between local landowners and users, to ensure a mixed use that brings benefits to all parties.*

2.5.2. Litter, Waste and Dog Fouling

Litter is an issue which our questionnaire highlights as one of the most common concerns of residents. It is an avoidable problem. The two most obvious solutions are increasing a sense of responsibility within the community and schools, and the extended provision of collection and bins.

- *We need several more anti-vandal bins for both rubbish and dog fouling.*
- *The town should re-institute a regular, perhaps quarterly, litter collection day. If necessary 'tongs' and gloves and black sacks should be provided. It might be worth dividing the town geographically, promoting self-interest in anti-litter campaigning. All our schools should be invited to participate.*
- *Our standard of street cleaning is often poor and should be more regular. This is the responsibility of the District Council and while cost is clearly an issue it might be that ratepayers consider this a greater priority than other service provision areas.*
- *Holiday changes to regular rubbish collection are poorly advertised. A small notice in the window of the Community Office is inadequate, and like other*

local authorities it needs to be announced in the local press. Uncollected rubbish is an invitation for animals and weather to spread waste around the town.

- *We are most concerned about the District Council's plan to issue every household with two colour-coded wheeled bins, each to be collected fortnightly, and also two brown bins for food waste to be emptied weekly. This is in addition to the current black box collections. There will be problems of where all these bins and boxes will be accommodated in our houses, of blocked pavements and roads, and the confusion of what is collected when. Can we not use the cheaper, simpler and easier method of colour coded plastic sacks?*
- *The recycling point in the Tolbury Car Park is a valuable asset, but it is regrettable that it should take up so many parking places and its use can give rise to some noise pollution. There may be alternative sites, such as at the station.*
- *Wind turbines contribute to our search for sources of renewable energy, although there is an argument over their cost effectiveness and on their potential to visually damage the landscape. We recommend that the Town Council develop a policy on this matter, noting that in our questionnaire 59% of those responding said they would accept them as ecologically desirable.*

3. A MOBILE COMMUNITY

Coping with travel, transport and traffic

Public transport in the countryside is in decline, with rising costs, fewer services and, understandably, less use. Subsidy has become essential but unreliable as government and councils weigh its huge appetite for funds with their other priorities. It really is a case of use it or lose it. Our aim must be to promote greater use coupled with negotiated service improvements within the county's transport policy. Unlike public transport, car use is growing with a projected 25% increase in the next 10 years. This poses a considerable challenge as to how we manage the volume and safety of traffic in Bruton.

3.1 Public Transport

A dedicated public transport system - buses, trains and, in this context, taxis - which meets community needs at a reasonable cost is vital to Bruton as a small rural town. The problem is cost, which reduces services and increases fares. The answer has been to subsidise services, but this is not keeping pace with rising expense. To quote the Minister of Transport 'the government is not in the business of carting fresh air around the countryside'. Our use of public transport must therefore increase to justify subsidy and defray costs, if we are to maintain even our current services.

3.1.1 Trains

The local service on the Bristol to Weymouth line is a much underused local asset to the Town. We have in our midst a safe, reliable, stress free, convenient and comfortable means of accessing, for instance, shopping in Bristol, Bath and Yeovil, a leisure outing to such places as Bradford-on-Avon or Dorchester, and even a trip to the seaside at Weymouth. It is also a valuable commuter route and a means of reaching sporting and entertainment venues. Although the number of trains is limited the service is regular throughout the day. Like all rail travel the fares are not cheap, but nor are they overly expensive, particularly when compared with the costs of petrol, and parking for a car. We need to 'sell' this service in co-operation with Wessex Trains.

- *The new Easy Read timetables are a great improvement on the old ones, but they need much wider recognition and availability.*
- *The notice board at the station needs to carry additional information for visitors. For example, a map of the town showing key features and buildings, directions to the Community Office as a source of information, details of local walks and access to Abbey Park and the Dovecote, and some form of promotion for local shops, restaurants and B&Bs.*
- *A more central notice board than that at the station, carrying the timetable and promoting rail travel, would help encourage train use.*

- *The hope that Intercity trains might stop at Bruton would seem unlikely to be realised. Against such a proposal are the increased journey times, insufficient use, and the cost of additional facilities.*
- *The railway station refurbishment has been a triumph for the town, and those involved must be congratulated. There remains the relatively minor improvements already planned such as lighting on the approach road and cycle racks. However, also outstanding is access to the down platform for pushchairs, the physically disabled, and those carrying heavy luggage. We believe that with negotiation and goodwill, positively pursued, with the owners of the adjacent land, a solution might be possible.*

3.1.2 Buses

Bus services to and from the town are threatened by underuse and rising costs, yet they remain essential to many in the community. In theory, there should be a cost effective and streamlined service. Early buses provide transport to work and school, buses in the middle of the day are used for shopping and appointments, late afternoon buses provide for the return from school and work, while evening buses provide transport to leisure activities. It just does not seem to work out at present.

- *While we appreciate a bus route must serve the needs of many communities, it is possible that with cooperation and coordination local services might more closely be timetabled to meet the needs of the community.*
- *A direct bus service to Shepton Mallet, including the hospital, would be welcomed.*
- *Bus routes which link Bruton with connections for onward travel need to be part of our local service.*
- *Those waiting for buses have minimal shelter at two bus stops in the town. We should investigate improving this situation with perhaps more shelters for bus users. User friendly shelters do not need to be an eyesore, but siting is, we acknowledge, a problem.*
- *Bus timetables need to be clearer and in a larger typeface, with a route map.*

3.1.3 Community Accessible Transport

This is a welcome service and works well but with two caveats.

- *For those people most likely to use the CAT bus, the cost is high. We should seek to keep the fares at an acceptable level.*
- *The CAT bus is often, understandably, reluctant to make a return journey pick-up within less than an hour or so. This corresponds to more than a typical hospital appointment or shopping trip, and, as a result it can be a long wait to return home. While we appreciate the service must be limited, there may be ways of alleviating the problem.*

3.1.4 Taxis

Taxis can provide both mobility to those without a car and be an alternative means of travel to car use, for instance, journeys to the airport or for a night out. They can, though, be both expensive and unreliable.

- *We would propose that the town keeps a voluntary register for those offering a taxi service. This 'approved list' would be accessible to the community, carry the necessary contact information and note any restrictions such as long journeys. If a listed taxi service is deemed unreliable because of repeated complaints, that service should be removed from the list. Such a system would give confidence to users and encourage responsible taxi services.*

3.2 Traffic Planning and Management

The Bruton road system was in large part designed for horses and pedestrians and not for the ever-growing volume of traffic that now uses it. We must accept that a town bypass is highly unlikely and in many respects, undesirable, and that we cannot realistically expect to redesign our road layout. Therefore we must turn to traffic management and control to alleviate our problems.

3.2.1 Commercial Vehicles

Our continuing aim is to minimise the size and number of heavy vehicles passing through Bruton.

- *The current weight restriction is regularly ignored and should be enforced. Our new PCSO can play a positive role in this.*
- *We should look again at the weight limit warning signs. Are they in the right places; are they prominent enough; are they helpful in redirecting heavy vehicles?*
- *We should review the exempt scheme to see if some licences are not more for convenience than necessity.*
- *Restricting deliveries by vehicles over a given weight, to specified times in the day might help.*
- *Do relevant heavy vehicle groups such as the Road Haulage Association have notice of the Town's weight restriction and alternative routes?*
- *We suggest making the High Street less friendly to large vehicles, which we consider under traffic management below.*

3.2.2 Parking

There are two vehicle parking problems in the town: firstly, parking which causes obstruction, and, secondly, insufficient parking places.

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- *Illegal parking, which causes an obstruction, must be dealt with by the police and our PCSO.*
 - *Legal parking causing an obstruction is a matter for the County's Highway Authority. There is a balance to be struck between convenience for adjacent properties without off-road parking and the interests of road users. Particular areas where legal parking causes obstruction is along Quaperlake Street, the Cole Road as it approaches the railway bridge from the west, and the Wyke road near the old Toll House.*
 - *Any new housing should, where practical, be required to include off-road parking.*
 - *The Tolbury Mill car park is much used for residential and workplace parking. If we wish to attract shoppers and visitors to the town we need to revise and enforce parking restrictions.*
 - *Weekday time-limited parking in Lower Backway for non-residents would seem the only realistic additional parking available at this time.*
 - *Directional signing to the High Street, from both Tolbury car park and Lower Backway, would be helpful to visitors.*

3.2.3 Managing Traffic

Effective control of the flow and speed of traffic through the centre of Bruton would make a significant contribution to the quality of life of many residents as well as pedestrian safety.

- *If the A359 Frome- Sparkford road could be downgraded to B road status on the ground of its unsuitability (Galhampton, A371 cross roads, Pitcombe, schools lining the road, Bruton and Wanstrow) there would be an immediate gain for the town, particularly in the High Street and Quaperlake Street. This would mean redirecting north east and south west traffic between the A303 and Frome, via the A37 Shepton Mallet and A361 Frome roads. The slightly greater distance would probably be the faster alternative because of much better traffic flow, and would certainly be the safer route. This merits consideration as a long-term aim.*
- *A 20mph speed limit around the one-way system, and ideally also on the Cole Road, is, because of road widths and layout, schools, on-road parking, shopping and poor provision for pedestrian use, a clear priority. Not only would this considerably improve road safety but in itself would be likely to help deter traffic volume. Although not current County Highways policy, there are precedents.*
- *The High Street is not only the site of more accidents involving vehicles than anywhere else in Bruton, it is also the most important street in the town as well as that most affected by traffic volume and speed. However, there exists,*

in our opinion, the opportunity to manage the traffic using this street better and to greatly improve its visual impact. At the beginning of the High Street, around number 69 and 71, a restrictive throat and slight ramp would slow traffic and deter heavy vehicles. It would also allow a continuous pavement for pedestrians on the north side. New pavements of light coloured slabs, laid to a revised layout would certainly be beneficial to pedestrians, perhaps better delineate parking, and certainly improve the appearance of the road. This, coupled to new signing and a review of lighting, and a badly needed resurfacing, perhaps using a lighter coloured tarmac, would be a huge benefit to Bruton. We acknowledge the sensitivity of this area, and would propose that a master plan for the redesign of the street be drawn up and costed. If the work could not be carried out in one operation because of funding and disruption, then it could be done in two or more periods. We believe a piecemeal approach of minor make-do and mend ad hoc repairs is no longer acceptable.

- *Both the installation of electronic speed indicators on the approaches to the town, and repeat maximum speed warning signs would be effective reminders of the speed limit.*
- *Community Speed Watch should be encouraged and extended through recruiting more volunteers. This could include monitoring the illegal use of the High Street by heavy vehicles. A figure in a yellow fluorescent jacket with a 'speed gun' is a very effective deterrent. It is also important that police 'warning' letters are sent to persistent offenders.*

4. AN AMBITIOUS COMMUNITY

Prosperity through learning, skills and successful enterprise

Economic prosperity within our community is achieved through successful enterprise, near full employment and a trained workforce. Fundamental to these aims is provision for lifelong learning. This embraces academic schooling, higher education and vocational training, together with access to new skills to meet fresh challenges. It is in large measure through the enterprise of our local small and very small businesses that wealth and work are generated in the community.

4.1 Learning

It was an American football coach who said 'the difference between the impossible and the possible is determination'. He might have added that determination is dependent on opportunity. We are fortunate that here in Bruton local schooling at all ages is so well provided for our children. Higher education and skills training post school is widely available in the area, but not locally. Our challenge is to encourage more school leavers to continue their studies. The extensive choice of adult education within reasonable travelling distance, continues the thread of lifelong learning.

4.1.1 Early Learning

Pre-school care in Bruton is available through four thriving and well attended groups. Both those at Sunny Hill and at the Meadow School offer continuing education. Additionally we have three registered childminders in Bruton.

- *From about two years old a child normally starts to interact with other children and their character moulding begins. It is therefore important that every child in our community has an opportunity to benefit from early learning. Parents should be aware that funding is now available for 4 year olds, as well as 3 year olds, for up to five half days per week.*
- *The Meadow School, which welcomes children up to 11 years old, is seeking improved accommodation. They deserve the support of the town.*
- *Playgroups, nurseries and kindergartens offer an opportunity for health advisers to meet with both young children and their mothers. This should be seen as a welcome and beneficial move.*

4.1.2 Primary and Secondary Education

Bruton is fortunate in having both a primary and a secondary school. This theoretically allows community children to progress the education system from 5 to 16 years old. Alternative secondary education is provided reasonably locally at Wincanton and Ansford.

- *Following the Government's recent announcement that half of all primary schools are to be re-built or refurbished over the coming years, it will be important for the future education of our local children that Bruton Primary School is included in this programme.*
- *Primary school class sizes are important to enable staff to offer children the attention they need at a young age. Overall, though the school needs numbers to secure its future. This could be helped by additional housing scheduled for 2007.*
- *Parking at the Primary School at the beginning and end of the school day is a perennial problem, caused by the road system. It would do much to alleviate the problem if children living, say, within a mile of the school could safely walk to and from their homes.*
- *One way in which interested members of the community can help in the success of our local authority schools is by volunteering to be a governor. Governors serve a four year term, and their work involves working with the Head and staff to shape the future of the school.*
- *In the interests of a broad and balanced education, we believe it is important for schools to engage with the community in which they live. There should exist a working relationship which recognises the benefits of co-operation and regular liaison. This might range from a school open day for the community, or a simple form of work by pupils in the community, to addressing potential problems such as drinking and drug taking. We would recommend perhaps a twice yearly meeting between council leaders and school managers.*
- *Community access to school facilities, such as sports and arts venues, is not as straightforward as many would believe. The very real problems of availability, maintenance, supervision and insurance are one sided. However, we would hope that schools might look sympathetically at reasonable requests for help, in addition to the facilities they already allow to be used by the community. There is also the 'half-way house' whereby the schools might undertake a particular task on behalf of the community: training a town youth football or cricket team, or offering some assistance with netball coaching, are examples.*

4.1.3 Higher Education and Skills Training

Sexey's has a thriving sixth form, but apart from this, 16 year olds who wish to continue their academic education must travel outside the immediate area. It is much the same for those taking a vocational stream for training.

- *There are a very large number of further education courses available at places such as Strode College, Yeovil College and Somerset College of Arts and Technology. The challenge is to encourage school leavers to take up such courses. One key is making information on courses and grants easily available, and ensuring suitable transport links are maintained.*

- *Advice and help is very important and we need to further publicise Somerset Connexions and Careerfinder, particularly for school leavers.*

4.1.4 Later Learning

Opportunity for lifelong learning has never been easier. Adult learning courses are widely available in the local area, and the Internet and University of the Third Age offer home study.

- *This biggest barrier to adult learning is not the provision of courses but of their promotion in the community. An Adult Learning Advisor, who can give help, guidance and information, visits Bruton fairly regularly but is little used we suspect because the existence of this service is little known. Otherwise, if you do not happen upon a prospectus you will not know about the availability of courses. We need to find much better ways of promoting such opportunities.*
- *It is quite possible, given sufficient demand, for courses to be run in the town, computing for instance. The potential of a recent in-town course suffered through lack of publicity.*

4.2 Employment and Enterprise

Businesses create and sustain employment, and their success is crucial to our prosperity. Whereas in the past a few traditional employers, such as agriculture, dominated employment in the town, it is now much diversified with only the schools as a group being a major employer. There are benefits to this situation as it offers protection against particular sector downturns or the misery of a single failure or event producing large job losses. However, it also means we need a wide range of skills and experience, and there are fewer opportunities for job progression or promotion. These are the challenges we face.

4.2.1 Jobs

People who work are motivated by money, or job satisfaction or ambition, or most likely a combination of all of these. We must as far as possible match the human resources available in the community with work opportunities in Bruton and the local area.

- *Careers advice is well provided at school. However post school it is more difficult for young people to be motivated and to access advice about further education and careers. While the Jobcentre Plus at Yeovil offers a useful service, there are practical difficulties which discourage those, mainly young, people who need it. Less well known is the potential help offered in Bruton by the visiting Adult Learning Adviser, who is also able to guide young people to sources of additional and specialised help in considering a career. This service is in need of much improved promotion.*

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- *Work-related training, both on-the-job and employer sponsored courses, are a way of improving skills. We should encourage local businesses to commit themselves to this.*
 - *We should help mothers with children, who are considering a return to work. For instance, we can encourage a crèche and childcare. Equally we can encourage part time jobs to suit family commitments.*
 - *Job sharing, flexible and experienced semi-retired employees are all valuable to business and the community. We need to make available information on such opportunities.*
 - *Centrally held comprehensive information on employment vacancies is the essential gateway for job seekers. We believe that as far as possible information should be held locally, perhaps in the Community office and duplicated in the Library. The bald current listing on a sheet of paper is barely adequate. A looseleaf folder indexed by qualification requirements together with comprehensive information on each local job vacancy would be a great improvement.*
 - *Although, because of the generally very small size of most local businesses, there is probably less opportunity to establish a Somerset LinX scheme for work experience, we hope local employers might explore the possibility of some form of liaison with schools.*

4.2.2 Retail Businesses

Our High Street shops are vital to a thriving community. They offer both employment and provide a service directly affecting us all. They face fierce competition, principally of choice and cost, from supermarkets and chain stores outside Bruton but within reasonable travelling distance. However, there are advantages accruing to our local shops, including convenience, stock carefully selected and targeted at local demand, and customer loyalty.

- *Shopping in Bruton should be a pleasurable experience, stress free and satisfying. Parking, opening times and days, courtesy and the quality, variety and range of goods offered all persuade shoppers to spend their money in the town. Only one half day closing during the week might be considered.*
- *Speciality stock, particular food, encourages customers who then also buy the more basic items. We have fast food outlets, but slow food, i.e. locally produced food, is not as readily available as it might be.*
- *We must encourage our new local market, seeing it as an opportunity for all retailers to welcome more shoppers into the town. The spin-offs are also there for our pubs, restaurants and café. A regular market must offer something different or special to attract repeat custom - local food, organic food, fresh fish, local craft, local drink are all possible ideas. And we need to widely promote and publicise the market.*

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- *Shops are not always good at promoting themselves. The fiercer the competition the more is the need to publicise the advantages of local shopping. Leafletting and advertising are obvious means of promotion, but so too are coordinated joint promotions, special offers, themed events, etc.*
 - *We have four public houses. While their primary business is the sale and consumption of alcohol, they might consider complimentary attractions. There is a need in the town for light lunches, a wine bar with an appeal to a different clientele, and an opportunity for tea and coffee in a relaxed atmosphere. This follows a pattern more visible in urban areas than in small rural towns, but we believe matches changing habits and lifestyles.*
 - *Our questionnaire demonstrated a demand for new retail outlets, of which clothing, hardware and footwear were the most popular. We should seek to attract new shops that support community life.*

4.2.3 Non Retail Enterprises

We should be a business friendly town. This means supporting local enterprise and encouraging new businesses to locate to Bruton. This is an attractive place to work, but we also need to ensure there are the requisite facilities and services that recruitment opportunities and matching skills are available, and that we have good communication links.

- *Our business park offers light industrial use, but we doubt there is much call for expanding it or planning a new site. Rather we believe we should seek to attract very small enterprises offering professional, specialist or high technology employment, for which the town is more suited.*
- *Craft based enterprises would be welcome, but we have few suitable units to contain them. The loss of the station site and the difficulty and delay in developing another site, could, when there is a demand, jeopardize our ability to attract new businesses of this type.*
- *Home based enterprises have been given a welcome boost with the introduction of local broadband communications. Welcoming technological innovation into the town is a useful selling point for future enterprise location.*
- *We should particularly seek opportunities to attract small high value start-ups and young entrepreneurs. How and where do we promote Bruton as an ideal place for such enterprise?*
- *Our schools have replaced agriculture as our major employers for semi-skilled work. However, farm diversification offers new opportunities.*

4.2.4. Chamber of Commerce

We believe a strong active Chamber of Commerce has an important role to play in fostering best practice and representing Bruton's business community.

- *Our Chamber should be a first call for help and advice, not so much on its own account, although local knowledge and experience are important, but by pointing enquirers to professional assistance, typically about financial, promotional, recruitment and exporting matters.*
- *The Chamber should be the spokesperson who represents the opinions and concerns of the whole business community and who seeks to influence decisions on matters affecting business in the town.*
- *The Chamber has an important role in encouraging new enterprise to Bruton. It could be a source of information and inquiry. It could identify niche opportunities and it could offer practical help to start-ups and specialists.*
- *We found it very difficult to find out what businesses existed in Bruton. This is a pity as often joint campaigning and joint marketing are helpful to very small businesses. Moreover, there is possible trade to be conducted locally, particularly for small businesses. There already exist computing skills, marketing, design, photography, planning, copywriting and a host of other expertise. The best way to list and promote so many very small businesses is a Bruton Business Directory, produced say annually by the Chamber of Commerce.*
- *It would be worthwhile to consider a Bruton logo awarded by the Chamber to appear on local products, principally food. This would identify goods as local and of quality, encouraging consumer recognition and loyalty.*
- *To be truly effective the Chamber needs wide membership and strong support from the business community. Perhaps a re-launch is now needed. An active Chamber attracts members, but still needs Town and District Council support.*

4.3. Tourism

Tourism is a business for it has no ultimate function unless it is to attract spending and indirect employment. In South Somerset tourism contributes £160 million to our local economy and helps support around 5,000 jobs, it can, therefore be big business. To be successful it needs more than casual attention, which means we need to plan it, invest in it, and market it. However, unlike many other businesses it is seasonal and difficult to sustain. It is also a competitive business, but Bruton has the potential to take at least its market share.

4.3.1 Attracting Visitors

Most visitors to South Somerset come, we are told, because of the beauty of the countryside, followed by our heritage and gardens, and also because of our peace and quiet. Bruton has all of these as well as being a centre for further exploration.

- *Bruton has many attractions to offer to visitors but lacks a strategy to co-ordinate and create maximum value from them. We need to plan how we market the town to encourage visitors, how we present our heritage and*

natural environment, and how we provide those supplementary but necessary services such as information, parking and refreshment.

- *The benefits of marketing Bruton as part of a South Somerset Tourism campaign are principally financial - as a small town we do not have the funds to conduct our own marketing - but there is also advantage in combining with other attractions in the area in order to encourage a greater number of visitors. The downside is that we lose our own particular distinctiveness in a very competitive marketplace.*
- *Our Bruton leaflet, aimed at visitors, doesn't work hard enough for us. We must have living in the Community professional skills to produce an attractive and informative leaflet, that catches the eye because it is different and has a compelling story. We should be a 'must visit' and not a 'could visit'. Our Bruton leaflet is one of our most important marketing tools.*
- *We should feature in every directory, guide book, and special interest publication that we possibly can. We need a fact sheet extolling our attractions, and carrying all the information a visitor might need from travel to accommodation. We need to take a proactive approach to those who might help us through comment and listing.*
- *The town's internet website is well maintained, and consideration should now be given to allocating funds to enhance and expand this site, which is of growing importance. For instance, to gain maximum benefit from it, it should feature widely in searches and listings. There is also a need for fast simple access to information for different groups of enquiries, such as tourists, enterprises seeking to locate in the local area, sports and cultural information, council business, information on a wide variety of attractions, and maps on walks which can be downloaded.*
- *Our inclusion in the many regional tourist information leaflets and packages produced by our local authorities and Wessex Rail, are valuable in attracting visitors to Bruton. We need to have a policy of positively seeking such support using regular contact with respective promotional departments and organisations, and by wide and repeated distribution of up-to-date information and also news stories.*

4.3.2 Information and Access

Leaflets and websites are advertising. To succeed in giving visitors an enjoyable experience, which in turn leads to recommendations and repeat visits, we need to provide information and services for them.

- *The Community Office is central to information provision, including access by personal visit, post and telephone, and e-mail. The office should, if funding can be made available, be open over summer weekends.*
- *We need a free one page map of the town for visitors, showing sites of interest, useful facilities and how to reach them.*

- *The Community Office should be signed from the car parks and the station.*
- *We should give greater priority to displaying local literature, principally leaflets, about Bruton and nearby attractions, and local timetables.*

4.3.3 Accommodation, Food and Drink

Any visitor should arrive with expectation and leave satisfied. A successful visit is judged not only by emotional and cultural fulfillment but also by hospitality and the quality of the overall experience.

- *Accommodation – principally Bed and Breakfast and self-catering – should be comprehensively listed, including prices, and easily accessible, e.g. Community Office, information sheets, and our website. It should not be listed in, for instance, leaflets with a lifespan longer than a year, except as an insert.*
- *We need to offer visitors food and drink which is principally a daytime and a weekend demand. Our current weakness is in the limited availability of morning coffee, bistro style lunches and afternoon tea.*
- *An attractive, signed campsite, with basic facilities such as water and power, would be a welcome addition to the town.*
- *We should not forget boarding school parents as visitors to the town.*

4.3.4 Attractions

We are able to offer visitors a wide range of interests and attractions. Our town is relatively small and compact, and it is also the centre of access to numerous other attractions by foot, by bike and by car. We must find ways of exploiting these advantages.

- *Our series of leaflets on local walks are excellent. We might equally usefully group walks by history, nature, etc.*
- *There is merit in expanding our range of leaflets, to include cycle routes and horse rides.*
- *A circular heritage trail signed from the Community Office and including regular marker posts would draw together the attractions of our built heritage. We might have explanatory plaques on our buildings of particular interest, for which there is precedent. The trail marker posts might carry particular information or a number to identify a particular point on the route.*
- *We might make available for hire, against a deposit, from the Community Office, a small portable audiotape, as available at major exhibitions, for use walking along the heritage trail. Numbered marker posts would identify particular points for information carried on the audio tape.*

- *There is an exciting opportunity for us to invest in promoting Abbey Park and the Dovecote, where nature, history and landscape combine. There will be a need for explanation, through boards and visitor fact sheets, and good signing. There is also great potential for educational spin-off.*
- *Our museum presents a quandary. It is an asset to the town and a repository of our history. However, it sadly lacks the funding and space necessary to become something special, perhaps with interactive displays and exciting presentation. A dedicated band of volunteers maintains it, but like all small museums it is an ongoing expense. If we value it as a tourist and an educational asset we must decide what priority we should give to it and then support and fund it accordingly.*
- *We should widely exploit the success of the Packhorse Fair, our craft and art exhibitions, our music, our Farmers' Market, the Spiral of Light, and other local attractions. They bring visitors into the town, who spend money, quite apart from the pleasure and interest they give to the community.*

5. A CARING COMMUNITY

Meeting our needs for care and wellbeing

Our quality of life is very much determined by our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Health is perhaps our single most important personal concern. It can range from allowing us to enjoy life to the full to imposing severe constraints on how we live and what we can do. Social care allows us to reach out to everyone in the Community to offer help and inclusiveness. It is particularly concerned with the young, the old and the disadvantaged among us. Spiritual care provides pastoral care to many in the community and acts as a unifying and cohesive force for good. However, all these different forms of care come with a cost, dependent as they are on money, expertise, voluntary contributions in time and effort, and dedicated facilities. We should therefore be wary of taking them for granted and recognize them as community concerns and responsibilities.

5.1 Healthcare

At local level healthcare is provided by NHS Primary Care Trusts (PCT), in the case of Bruton by Mendip PCT. Although the town itself lies in South Somerset District, our health facilities are shared with other communities in the area many of which lie in Mendip district. Thus Mendip PCT invests in our family doctors and nursing care, which in our area is located at Bruton Surgery. They also manage community hospitals, our nearest being at Shepton Mallet, and they promote good health in the community. Secondary care is delivered principally at general hospitals such as at Yeovil and Bath, where there are a wide range of medical and surgical specialities, as well as accident and emergency departments. West Country Ambulance Services separately provide our ambulance cover. Dental care, both NHS and private is provided in the town. Bruton Pharmacy supplies our medicines.

5.1.1 Bruton Surgery

We have found little but praise for our family doctors and the services provided at the surgery. The provision of healthcare is, however, always a balance between available funding and need. As the former invariably lags the latter, there is a constant need to look forward while coping with the demands of today. Our community's size, mix and needs have meant that we have now practically outgrown the facilities of our present surgery. Consequently, there is a need to start looking at either enlarging our current building by expanding it upwards or sideways, or, preferably, by relocating to a new site with a new surgery building. A suitable site, which needs to be central, provides easy access and parking, and is attainable within a fairly tight budget, is perhaps the most difficult factor in locating a new surgery. These requirements are very similar to those needed for a new Community Centre, and there may be advantages in siting them together. They might also be complementary in other ways, for instance, parking is a daytime requirement for the surgery, but principally an evening and weekend requirement for a Community Centre. At best, a new surgery might also be adjacent to a new dental surgery and perhaps a pharmacy. It might also incorporate facilities for social services, community mental health teams and complementary medicine.

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- *While a new Surgery is probably some years away from realization, it is essential that we start now to compile a community case for its building, and earmark suitable sites with some outline planning. We cannot afford to wait for an opportunity to appear and then begin to think about its acquisition: it will be too late by then.*
 - *The surgery provides a number of services and specialist clinics, but cannot expand these without further funding and space. There is also some demand for complementary medicine. All these underline our need for more and better facilities.*
 - *The promotion of the services and clinics provided at the surgery, together with updated information and access to doctors and wider specialist medical advice and care, would be welcomed by the community.*
 - *The Out-of-Hours Doctor Service has undergone recent changes to the way it works and how services are provided. This is not widely known or understood.*
 - *There can sometimes be frustration with the division of responsibility for the provision of healthcare by Mendip PCT and the delivery of certain, particularly social, services by South Somerset District Council. While we appreciate that in many respects the current boundaries work to our advantage, there might be merit in looking at those areas of care which are not so well co-ordinated, to see if any problems can be identified and overcome.*
 - *There is presently no clear public involvement or exchange of ideas and information between the surgery and the community. We believe there is benefit for both parties in setting up a regular dialogue.*

5.1.2 Dental Care

We welcome the arrival of a new dental practice in Bruton. There is, however, continuing concern at the lack of NHS dental care in the town.

- *The Dental Practice premises, while adequate, would clearly benefit from new purpose built facilities and improved parking arrangements. Planning permission has recently been granted for the current premises to extend, however, a newly sited Bruton surgery may be an excellent opportunity to include at the same site, a new dental surgery.*

5.1.3 Other Community Healthcare

While the Surgery provides for our primary healthcare as part of the NHS, there are a number of other providers offering advice, support and complementary care.

- *The importance of our local Midwife is well understood. However, less well understood is the role of our Health Visitor who is a specially trained community nurse, experienced in childcare as well as health promotion and education. Health Visitors are normally identified with the healthy upbringing of babies and very young children, but this is only a part of their remit. They are involved more widely with the health and well-being of the community at*

large, but particularly with the concerns of young people. Typically they might deal with stress, sexual and weight problems, help with psychological difficulties and family breakdown, and give advice and support in behavioural problems with children. These nurses are based at the surgery, but have barely adequate space to see clients or hold meetings or classes. They are in urgent need of better facilities and better funding.

- *Promotion of additional health services, such as physiotherapy and chiropractic would be welcome. This could be a group, town council or surgery initiative.*
- *Responders are trained volunteers able to attend emergencies. Our own Bruton Group is little known, and their contact very difficult to find.*
- *First Aid can be a lifesaver, and is our first reaction to an emergency situation. We are mostly ignorant of even its basics and there must be a need for classes. Organisations like the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance will, if there is sufficient demand, run local courses.*

5.1.4 Healthy Living

The Government has become increasingly concerned about our living a healthy lifestyle. This can only be a good thing, but short of compulsory community PT on a Saturday morning in Jubilee Park, it is a voluntary commitment. What we should do is provide encouragement and opportunity.

- *Keeping fit is natural to the young and active. It needs more dedication for the rest of us. Our opportunities for walking, cycling and participation in sport need promotion, emphasizing their benefit for healthy living.*
- *Organised exercise such as yoga and keep-fit classes can be fun and bring benefits to those who perhaps cannot or do not want to participate in competitive sport. This is a popular way of taking regular exercise and again should be encouraged, although we have few adequate facilities for meetings and classes.*

5.2 Social Care

Social care provides help, protection and support within the community, particularly to people who have special needs. This includes the young, the old, or those who for a variety of reasons are vulnerable and might otherwise be unable to take an active part in the Community. Professional specialist care is provided by Somerset Social Services. However, there is additionally an important element of social care offered by a number of voluntary organisations and individuals within the community.

5.2.1 The Young

The very young and young mothers are generally well catered for in the primary healthcare system and, where there are any particular needs, provision is made by Somerset Social Services. It is, however, more difficult to target problems suffered by youngsters of school age, such as drink, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

- *Parents must have primary care and responsibility for their children. However, awareness of a problem, maybe bullying or drug taking, is not always easy to recognise. Helping parents to understand the pressures that can cause problems, how they can be recognized and what help can be given is useful support for families. Our surgery based Health Visitor can offer expert advice and support, and dedicated literature is also available. Our challenge is to ensure that such sources of assistance are well publicised.*
- *Schools have a large part to play in the care of children out of school, as well as in. It is easy to regard pupils as a responsibility only when they are on school premises, but in fact children's behaviour is often moulded in school. A part of their education should include awareness of problems such as drink, drugs and sexual behaviour, and also the responsibility we have to each other in a community. We believe our schools are good at this, but sufficient is never enough in this case.*
- *The attitude of the community to problems with and within the young is, often with justification, sharply critical. However, if we can also look with some sympathy, acknowledge there are pressures such as boredom and their peers, as well as a lack of understanding of the harm consequential to their behaviour, then we can be less confrontational. We should all look at how we can help, before resorting to the law.*

5.2.2 The Old

The principal challenges for the older members of the community are health, mobility, security and sociability. In large part, the elderly can and proudly do help themselves. At times they need community support.

- *Suitable housing providing basic needs, including warmth and security, enable the elderly to live an independent life in their own homes. We should ensure that our elderly population can access grants for improving their homes. This requires the dissemination of information and help in application.*
- *Personal security is more likely to be a problem with the elderly who are more vulnerable to theft and fraud. Very often it is a regular reminder that offers the best protection.*
- *Emergencies can often be avoided by good neighbourliness. We should each be alert to potential problems for our older neighbours. This runs from simple physical help such as putting out rubbish or doing the shopping, to a willingness to act as a first means of assistance with things like illness or problems around the house. Nearly all of us are willing to help, but being aware of real or potential difficulties should be our aim.*

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- *There should be a list of vulnerable people, perhaps held by the Town Council, who might require help in an emergency, such as powercuts or strikes.*
 - *Transport is often a difficulty for the elderly. The CAT bus is a great benefit. So too is the offer of a lift for shopping further afield, particularly for clothes. Apart from helpful neighbours we need a list of volunteer drivers.*
 - *Loneliness is felt more acutely by the elderly, and in particular by those who are housebound. The Day Centre admirably provides all -important sociability for older residents, and is deserving of all the help and support we can give. Support is more often than not best provided by volunteering to assist.*
 - *It must always be our aim to help older people to continue to live in their own homes, and community care is vital to achieve this. However, there may come a time when the elderly need everyday assistance in their daily lives, and for this reason a Bruton care home would be a welcome addition to the town. As a potential private venture, we would need to persuade those considering such an initiative of the merits of our case. Sexey's Hospital and South Somerset Homes housing are valuable assets to the town, but their provision is limited and they cannot offer nursing care.*
 - *We warmly acknowledge the considerable voluntary care and support offered in the community through such events as Saturday coffee mornings held in the Community Hall and the work of the Royal British Legion, among others; also for fundraising for, typically, the Hospice, RNIB, the Children's Society, etc.*

5.3 Spiritual Care

Faith in our community is substantially Christian, and has played a dominant role in shaping the fabric of our society. While perhaps this is less true now than it has been in the past its importance in the everyday life of many in the town, means that it has a vital and central role within the community.

5.3.1 Bricks and Mortar

Our parish church and Methodist chapel are foremost outward and visible signs of Christian worship. They provide a place for collective worship and are also the core of our local heritage. In the past, they were the centre of the community and the community sustained them. This is no longer true, and the burden of maintaining their fabric and curtilage has fallen on the few. This is a problem common to many churches and there is a need for imaginative solutions in funding their upkeep.

- *Before the 19th Century churches provided a meeting place for all kinds of community activities. There are plenty of good reasons why they might do so again. This would create an opportunity for the church to take a central role in community life again, and on a more prosaic level offer much needed space for meetings and concerts. It would also provide a means of limited fundraising.*

- *While the Churchyard of St Mary's is the responsibility of the town, the church itself is cared for by parish donations and a dedicated group of parishioners. There may come a time in the future when, if we wish to maintain this 'jewel in the crown', we will as a community need to fund much of this work ourselves.*
- *We do not believe our vicarage should be sold, as has been proposed. It well meets the needs of the incumbent and is ideally placed in relation to the church, particularly for security watch and might also provide a parish administrative office. It is a positive asset for the parish and for the town.*

5.3.2 Spiritual Welfare

The role that our 'church' plays in our town life is perhaps wider than many people realize. It provides a focus and support for a Christian community but it also ministers to many social needs - christenings, youth activities, marriages, burials - and provides a compassionate source of help for instance to the old, sick, bereaved and the disadvantaged.

- *At the time of writing this report we are in an interregnum, our previous rector having left and a new one not yet appointed. Whatever constraints may exist, whether financial or of competing needs, it is hugely important for the community and for our schools that a new rector be quickly appointed.*
- *As a town we must seek to support and help our Parish priest, for in every sense the community has much to gain.*

6. A CONFIDENT COMMUNITY

Promoting sport, culture and an active lifestyle

Our ability to lead a physically and mentally active lifestyle is a wish within all of us. Television and the car, while providing undeniable benefits, have seduced us into inactivity and being less social and caring. It is perhaps a reaction against this, encouraged by government, which has prompted us to seek regular exercise and value greater participation in community activities. In this we need to take advantage of the many opportunities we have around us in Bruton, and to develop them for the enjoyment of the whole community.

6.1 Sport

In this report we have classified sport as an organised and competitive physical activity. Sadly there is a decline nationally in the numbers participating regularly in sport, particularly in the 20-40 age group. Maybe this has something to do with school sports becoming so bound in regulation and risk adverse, and anything competitive being not PC. Nor is there sufficient investment in funding and coaching. This is a pity because sport is not only great fun, it is also healthy, educational as a social event, and offers youngsters an alternative to less acceptable activities.

6.1.1 Facilities For Sport

Looking down at Bruton from the air, and seeing such a huge array of sports pitches of every description, a stranger might be forgiven for thinking this is sporting Nineveh. But from the community's view this is far from the truth, and in fact we are probably less well off with sporting facilities than many other comparable small towns.

- *Football is, not surprisingly, the more popular of our two key sports, the other being cricket. Our weekend league team plays on the pitch at Jubilee Park, and this would seem to meet our current needs. There are limited facilities for practice and coaching, particularly on winter evenings and in foul weather. The Primary and Sexey's school allow some use of their facilities but we have no indoor training area. Unless a joint schools/community case can be made for one it is difficult to see how this situation might improve.*
- *Cricket, as the second key sport, has an excellent field, if underused at present. It therefore meets our current needs.*
- *Our two tennis courts and netball court in Jubilee Park and the bowling green are well used. Additional facilities are sometimes available at the schools. A further two tennis courts would be a medium term aim.*
- *There is, we believe, a real need for a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). This is an all-weather floodlit and fenced games area for such sport as five-a-side*

football, netball and basketball, perhaps tennis, and training and coaching. This could be a joint schools and community initiative, and, provided we made a case of proven need and could guarantee ongoing support and maintenance, would attract funding. It would also be a strong candidate for 'planning gain' when new housing is developed in 2007.

- *The Jubilee Park pavilion has, through lack of funds, got into poor condition, not least because of vandalism. We therefore welcome its new lease and coming refurbishment. It is a clubhouse and changing rooms for both football and cricket, as well as used by the youth club and Ladybird Playgroup. In time we should consider replacing it or extending it with an indoor sports hall.*
- *Until recently recreational maintenance grants from the District Council kept our football and cricket pitches well cared for. These grants will now cease and maintenance funding comes from the town council. It may now be the right time to consider modest charges for using the pitches and courts and to help defray the costs of maintenance, although this would need the agreement of the landowners.*
- *Our schools have excellent sporting facilities, but by and large these are not available for community use, and we understand the reasons for this. However, a new climate which encourages support to the community might in time lead to some selective shared use.*

6.2.1 Organisation

Sport thrives in the community in direct relation to the enthusiasm and dedication of a few key individuals. It is they who face the challenges of inspiring support, encouraging players, organising coaching and the training of coaches, and seeking funding.

- *Bruton Football club is a success story. They are active in growing the club from a weekend youth team playing in a local league to, they hope, an adult and girls side also. If they are successful in achieving charter status, and they are working hard towards this, then this will allow them access to centres of excellence for coaching skills and training, and provide opportunities for funding from, for instance, the Football Foundation. Currently they are partly funded by sponsors but need ongoing financial support. Grants are available, but require a strong community wide case to be made and a proven ability to provide running and maintenance costs. Town and District Council help is needed. Equally longer term financial commitments allow confident longer term planning.*
- *Our cricket club is, sadly, not such a healthy story. It has proved difficult to find players and coaches, which has been reflected in a drop in the number and quality of fixtures. The immediate need is to keep Bruton Cricket Club active until new enthusiasts can reinforce it.*

- *Tennis and netball, the other two sports played in the town, are heavily dependent on the hard work of a few individuals. They provide pleasure and enjoyment for community players, but, as ever, need funding support.*
- *There is little publicity to either advertise match dates or encourage aspiring players. This would seem to be missing an opportunity to gather support, recruit players and attract coaches. The organisers might rightly reply that the town offers no opportunities for them to promote their sport. We discuss this in section 8.3.*

6.3 Recreation

Less than half the population of South Somerset takes regular exercise. We hope this generalisation is not true of Bruton, because our recreational opportunities are wide and varied.

- *Our extensive pattern of footpaths and bridleways are set out in a series of leaflets available from the community office. Signposts and wayside markers of both named walks, such as the Macmillan Way and Leyland Trail, and of our local walks, might be termed adequate rather than good. Their improvement is a comparatively inexpensive task. More difficult is the maintenance of our paths, from cutting back undergrowth to surface repairs and fencing. It should, funds allowing, be the subject of a year round maintenance programme.*
- *Potentially difficult is our ability to stop the use of mechanically propelled vehicles, including four wheel drive cars, quad bikes and scramble motorbikes, on our hitherto pedestrian rights of way. We need to be aware of attempts to legalise such activities by changing their status.*
- *There is considerable support for the proposal to extend the riverside walk in the town, both upstream and downstream. We believe this is possible, albeit requiring the goodwill of various landowners.*
- *Riding is available locally including trail riding and hacking across country. Horses tend to poach ground on narrow pathways which may require surface filling for walkers in winter. Clear signing will divert horses away from footpaths.*
- *Cycling in the area of Bruton is well established, and the South Somerset Cycle Route touches the fringes of the town. Cycle racks, at the car park and at the station, would be welcome, and a cycle route map would be a useful addition to the series on local walks.*
- *For the very young we have a play area at Jubilee Park and another at Eastfields. Their maintenance is an ongoing priority if only for safety reasons, but we do not currently see a need for provision of a further playground.*

- *The provision of a skateboard park has an enthusiastic following in the town. Provided a site can be found which is relatively safe and, because of the noise generated, away from residential housing, then we believe this is a cause well worth encouraging.*
- *Keep fit and similar exercise could be developed if suitable space becomes available.*
- *A swimming pool figured high in our Questionnaire's wish list of recreational needs for Bruton. It would indeed be a useful addition to the town, but we believe for practical reasons it must remain a very long-term aim. An outdoor pool, limited by seasonal use, would cost annually in the region of £40,000 just to staff and maintain, while an indoor pool would perhaps need £2,000,000 to build without ongoing costs and the cost of a site. Moreover, any appeal for funding would take into account the proximity of Wincanton's new indoor pool with all its attendant facilities and Ansford's outdoor pool, although its future is in doubt because of the high cost of maintaining it. Our only realistic hope for a pool might lie in our joining forces with our local schools, but it is difficult to see how this might work in practice.*
- *Jubilee Park offers recreational opportunities, apart from sport. This area, when combined with the Dovecote and now Abbey Park, offers a chain of linked walks and open space for community use. We should consider exploiting this with a simple guide explaining their natural history and their heritage.*
- *It is worth considering the value of a town event, in addition to the Packhorse Fair and the Meadow School's Spiral of Light. A Midsummer event based at Jubilee Park with a barbecue and fireworks would engender a sense of community and fun. This might combine our town sporting and recreational activities, including, if possible, Mill on the Brue. This year there are opportunities to celebrate the end of the Second World War on Trafalgar Day. What about a town Christmas party for all the older residents?*

6.4 Opportunities for Enjoying Art, Culture and Leisure Activities

The mind as well as the body needs active stimulation. This can come through opportunities to express and educate ourselves. In Bruton we are lucky to have a wide choice of ways in which we can practice and develop our interests and talents. Most leisure activities that are available now are in need of improved space and facilities, underlying our need for a purpose built community centre.

6.4.1 Arts and Culture

We have in the community strong and active support for artistic endeavour and cultural activity. Art, music including choral work, drama, literature and craft are all pursued with enthusiasm.

- *Bruton Festival of Arts week is a popular success story. We should consider building on this success, and promote it widely to attract more visitors to the town.*
- *The Packhorse Fair, although not exclusively a cultural festival, has much art, craft and musical content. This has proved a winning formula and attracts wide support. We hope it will grow to become bigger and better, and at the same time as offering an enjoyable day out, it will also bring visitors and income into the town.*
- *Our Library provides a useful and welcome service, but lacks space, has poor access, and has limited opening hours. It is a popular educational and leisure resource for the community, and for that reason we should seek to expand and develop its services. We need to consider a new building, central but not necessarily in the High Street. More space would allow an increased stock of books and information, and an improved and expanded computer facility. We should look at this as a medium term objective.*
- *Our museum might undertake the role of town archivist. Our rich history is vulnerable to deterioration and dispersal. A start has been made to assemble records, documents, photographs and objects. This could be a project in which schools might welcome involvement, and include sound and video contributions. Ultimately this material could be the basis of a much needed new illustrated book of Bruton, and a new town guide for visitors.*

6.4.2 A New Community Centre

A modern multi-use community centre is one of Bruton's most pressing needs, which has been highlighted in replies to our questionnaire. Our current mix of small halls and rooms built in another age for other uses is unsatisfactory for our requirements in 2005. Over time they have served the community well, and our church hall, aka the community hall, especially is kept in exemplary condition. However even collectively they are unable to meet our urgent need for modern and larger facilities, and moreover none is community owned.

- *A new community centre must be multi purpose. It should encompass the need for a large meeting room, with blackout and projection facilities, for talks, lectures, meetings and a film club, space and facilities for dramatic and musical performances, including a stage, room for exhibitions and, typically, keep fit, judo, bingo and antenatal classes. It should be home to a youth club and provide space for children's activities including a playgroup. It should accommodate groups such as Scouts, Guides and Brownies, it should welcome social clubs such as the Mini Day Centre, and it should offer catering facilities and nearby parking. And, most importantly, it should become the focus of the community. This is a tall order but it is what we believe should be our aim.*
- *A suitable site, if possible near the centre of the town, is a first requirement. There are a number of options available which would allow for a suitably sized*

building together with parking space. There is probably no site which would offer everything we seek in an ideal world, but that should not put us off.

- *It is just possible that if a large enough site was available, a new community centre might share space with a new surgery. The advantages accruing from this would include shared parking and security, and some shared services.*
- *If we agree that this is one, if not the, most important objectives in the community, then we must start preparation now. We must make an appraisal of our needs, identify suitable sites, prepare a capital and revenue budget, and seek sources of funding. We need to assemble a very strong case and plan how this should be effectively presented. There is likely to be a five-year campaign ahead of us, but the benefits to the town are potentially so great that it is worth our concentrated efforts. We suggest a Community Centre Committee be formed to take this project forward.*
- *We identified strong feelings that some past attempts at providing community facilities or allocating grants had, however well intentioned, been misplaced. The Community 'hall' at Tolbury was an example quoted to us. There was a belief that any available funding for such projects should only be directed towards community owned and used buildings.*

6.5. Youth

Mention this word to many people and they will instinctively react negatively, thinking of nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Undoubtedly there is a greater challenge today than in the past of meeting adolescent perceptions of alienation from mainstream community life, and of finding channels for their energy and interests. The challenge is not new, but has been exacerbated by new pressures including stress, the availability of drink and drugs, changing sexual norms and the influence of television; nor is it a local challenge but a national concern. We need to respond positively by offering measured assistance and encouraging self-help. All of this has already been discussed in Bruton - at the 2003 Young Peoples Consultation, at the 2004 Youth Meeting, and more recently at a meeting sponsored by Bruton : The Way Forward. The results of these meetings are similar. What we now need to do is to look at how we can turn discussion into action. That is the positive response to move us forward.

6.5.1 Organised Initiatives

There are a number of initiatives designed to engage young people, which are offered by our local councils and by volunteers. Their success is mixed, principally because limited funding constrains their sustainability. Nor are they singly or collectively able to attract more than a small part of the spectrum of the under 21s. Their, and our, real problem is in reaching many more young people. Despite this these initiatives offer a valuable if little appreciated service to many youngsters, encouraging responsible behaviour, directing interests, meeting a need for sociability, and signposting help with problems.

- *Bruton has a professionally managed Youth Club in the Jubilee Park pavilion. It is much needed, if sometimes poorly attended. Perhaps the major obstacle to its successful development and in attracting greater numbers, is the poor facilities they are given. We are failing our youth if we cannot do better than provide a dark and isolated site with a relatively small and dreary room in a building in poor condition with outside loos. Even inside the room there is worn equipment and inadequate facilities for a Youth Club, and space is further restricted by piles of furniture covered in blankets. These are not our observations only but also come directly from its users. Nor is it a criticism of those who struggle with vandalism and limited funds to maintain the pavilion. However, even with its promised refurbishment it can only be a short-term solution for a decent Youth Club. If we wish to capture the imagination of young people we must look at how we can offer them a bright and cheerful space of reasonable size, adequately equipped, and centrally sited. Might, for instance, the Scouts Hall still fulfil its purpose by hosting a once or twice weekly Youth Centre?*
- *Sport is high on the list of any youngster's wish list. Bruton's Football Club's efforts to help youth are commendable, but there are few other opportunities for physical activities. There are two ways in which we might help. The first is a determined effort to build a Multi Use Games Area, (MUGA), already discussed under sport at paragraph 6.1.1. This must be concurrent with attracting volunteers to organise and coach youngsters. There is also advantage in that a MUGA equally invites use by girls as well as boys. The second way we might encourage participation in sport is to ask our schools, particularly Kings, Sunny Hill and Sexey's to help the community by organising and training Bruton youth teams for, perhaps over ambitiously, rugby, judo, hockey, netball and tennis. This would be one of the most valuable contributions they could make to community support and integration.*
- *Would it be possible to sponsor local youth days during the holidays at Mill on the Brue?*
- *There are a number of excellent youth initiatives in the area but outside Bruton. The LinX Project and the range of junior indoor sports activities available at Wincanton, and shortly Ansford sports centre are examples. Their drawback for Bruton is that, short of parental transport, they are difficult to reach. The dedicated bus laid on by the town council in the summer holidays proved successful. We believe this initiative is well worth pursuing, perhaps also a round return trip to include the cinema in Yeovil and selected social evenings in nearby towns.*
- *Creative activities freely open to children are scarce out of school. This is due to the familiar problems of suitable space and a lack of volunteer organisers. Dance, painting and music sessions are among those initiatives worth exploring. If only we had a modern community centre.....*

6.5.2 Self-Help Initiatives

Activities which are either organised by their users, or leave young people to 'do their own thing' are doubly beneficial. They become more acceptable to young people and they encourage initiative and responsibility.

- *There is an agreed need for a 'drop-in' centre, but so far there has been no progress in providing one. At its simplest this can be a hut, accepting its vulnerability to damage and misuse, and at its more sophisticated a café, perhaps as part of a new Community Centre. Let us at least start with something, and if it is successful think of how we can develop it.*
- *A graffiti board, regularly painted out, would either channel the artistic urges of local graffitists or encourage its spread. It is worth trying.*
- *A skate park is a popular and fashionable wish for many young people. It does not have to be expensive, and we would guess a modest start would be more welcome than waiting for a sophisticated facility with multi-choice ramps and lighting. As so often the drag in realising such an ambition is down to raising money, although a good start has been made, finding a suitable site away from residential housing because of the noise, and the cold hand of health and safety. We can overcome all these problems given sufficient will and priority.*
- *Travel is too often a barrier to youth sociability, entertainment and sport. For young people a train journey to Frome, Bath or Yeovil is expensive. Could we look at helping by investigating ways of subsidising youth fares at key times of the day and at weekends. Buses offer a very limited service of an evening to, for instance, cinemas in Wells, Frome and Yeovil. We could look at this afresh with the bus companies: better for money to be spent subsidising an evening bus, than repairing damage around the town.*
- *Broadband Internet access is a welcome introduction in the area. Most homes probably now have a computer, but not all. Access to the net is provided in the Library but is not available out of school hours. A degree of light handed supervision is probably needed, but might this be something to consider initially as part of a re-born Youth Club but later within a Community Centre. An Internet café is probably too much to hope for.*
- *We should offer every young person in Bruton an opportunity to read Somerset County Youth Forum's 100 ideas for action.*

7. A SAFE COMMUNITY

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

Bruton is a low crime area. This may be of little comfort to those who have recently suffered from criminal acts or anti-social behaviour, but it has several consequences. Firstly, it reminds us to keep a sense of proportion in discussing crime and ways of keeping the town safe. Secondly, it reminds us that the fear of crime can be as worrying as the act itself, particularly for older and more vulnerable residents. Finally, it results in limited police resources often being directed elsewhere. We must, therefore, as far as possible seek to help ourselves through a number of anti-crime initiatives and work in partnership with the police and other agencies to curb and if possible prevent crime and vandalism.

7.1 Law and Disorder

The commission of an illegal act, its investigation and bringing its perpetrator to justice is a matter for the police, although they need our support in their work. Crime prevention, however, should be as much a community concern as police responsibility. An effective partnership between community and police will keep Bruton a low crime area.

7.1.1 Criminal Acts

Burglary, theft from motor vehicles and crimes against the person, such as assault, do regrettably sometimes take place in Bruton. We must seek to minimize the opportunity for such acts.

- *Awareness, particularly of times and places, where experience indicates crime is more likely to be committed, should allow resources to be targeted and warn us to be on our guard when and where we are most vulnerable. A crime 'map', compiled with the help of the police, would highlight these problem areas.*
- *There are a number of anti-crime initiatives, such as Safer Homes in Somerset and Beat the Burglar, which need further promotion, particularly to those who are more vulnerable. Perhaps this information could be actively distributed rather than passively available as handouts to be picked up from a rack or an office.*
- *Theft from a motor car is more likely to happen in Lower Backway than elsewhere. A warning sign there, and in other vulnerable areas, would be a helpful reminder to residents and a warning to visitors.*
- *Assault is often the result of drink, but when theft is the motive it becomes a calculated act and therefore more dangerous and difficult to predict. There are though measures we can take to help combat assault. These include general safety measures such as improved lighting but specifically making*

people aware, without causing fear, would be helpful. Typically widely distributed advice such as avoiding dark or lonely areas, not carrying valuables, alertness, keeping a firm hold on a bag, and if possible not walking alone, would be helpful.

- *Numerous campaigns dealing with specific problems, and the growing number of partnership initiatives to tackle crime, have their effectiveness blunted by their confusing proliferation. Pubwatch, Youth Watch, Speed Watch, Church Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Farm Watch and Station Watch are each worthy aims but realistically it is not possible to concentrate on them all. LCJBs, ASBOs, POUs, MCIUs, ASPOs, POP, ATF, PCA, IPCC, LRF, LATs are each important but little understood within the community. Special constables, Police Community Support Officers and Parish & Neighbourhood Wardens are different but in the public mind the same. Fewer but more concentrated initiatives and campaigns at community level, please.*

7.1.2. Vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour

These are degrees of the same crime, both probably spontaneous rather than premeditated. Boredom, a lack of civic pride, little understanding of social responsibility, no thought for other people or property, immaturity and peer pressure are all contributing factors. The damage caused by such behaviour and the emotional cost to victims, is often proportionately greater than those responsible foresee. Even when apprehended the perpetrators are rarely punished.

- *Vandalism is not always but mostly committed by young people. Social responsibility, and the unhappiness and cost of vandalism should be made plain by their parents and their schools.*
- *Jubilee Park has been a problem area and measures to reduce vandalism there are under discussion.*
- *Where possible potential vandalism should be a factor in planning, design, and purchasing. Examples are street furniture and sports facilities.*
- *Anti-social behaviour requires early action before it escalates. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are now a powerful though costly weapon for the courts. This, however, is a last resort and warnings are clearly preferable, but are dependent on the police being informed of the who, when and what.*

7.1.3 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The principal victims of both excessive drinking and drug taking are those who harm themselves. The secondary victims are those who suffer the consequences.

- *Sadly, both excessive drinking and drug abuse are increasing, not only locally but nationally. Government and health professionals are taking active steps to publicise the dangers of such activity, but perhaps more important are family, friends and schools who are usually in a position to help. Often, unfairly, it is*

the police who have to pick up the pieces. Confidential helplines should be widely available.

- *Suppliers of drugs, whether suspected or confirmed, must be reported to the police. Those who knowingly do not do so, carry a heavy responsibility for the harm done to people's lives. While residents rightly complain of 'drug pushing', no-one has provided serious evidence to the police on which they can take action.*
- *The sale of alcohol to minors is an offence. Most shops are responsible and operate a strict ID card system; however, one is not so responsible and the managers should be made aware of the problem. It is also an offence for anyone under 16 to sell alcohol. Nor do shops help this problem when they display alcoholic drinks near their tills.*
- *Pub Watch in Bruton has taken a puzzlingly long time to get going. The police have drawn up a protocol and those who do not sign up to it or who appear unwilling to follow it, should be asked why.*
- *Local councils will in future issue licences for the sale of alcohol. The Grant of a licence will now require the applicant to show what action is being taken to prevent drunkenness and rowdy behaviour, and to protect children. This will be welcome means for the community to insist on responsible behaviour from pubs and shops selling alcohol.*
- *The Council should re-consider introducing a By-Law prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in the town.*

7.2 Policing

Much is expected of the police and they have an ever wider range of responsibilities and duties. They are limited in manpower and limited in resources. They deserve our thanks and support, although constructive criticism of the police is as much an everyday topic as our weather.

7.2.1. Visibility and Attendance

It has been suggested that the local community should be consulted on the deployment and employment of the police in their area. The trend, however, is the reverse, with efficiency and effectiveness being achieved, it is claimed, through centralization. Even the Avon and Somerset Constabulary might lose its identity in a new regional West Country force.

- *Local policing by local police must be our aim. They know their own area and its community, and because of this they gain vital intelligence and contact. We should encourage this.*
- *Visible policing is reassuring, although the facts show it is not a panacea for preventing crime. We should seek their maximum public profile.*

- *Police response times are increasing as numbers diminish and resources are centralised into larger towns. We believe some contact from the police between a request for help and a long delayed response would help community confidence.*

7.2.2 Liaison and Information

The police cannot do their job if they do not have the information on which to act. Too often complacency on our part is the problem, claiming reporting is not worthwhile as nothing will happen. This can be true, and the problem is a joint one.

- *There should be a relationship of confidence between the community and its police. Apathy and fear are an encouragement to crime, and is a community problem. Timely and sympathetic response is a police problem. Both sides could try harder.*
- *A Local Action Team, either through nominated Councillors or a small interest group, who could discuss local policing matters, on a regular basis, would be beneficial to the Town. Such a group could represent the community's concerns to the police and help target particular problems,*
- *There needs to be some means of contact with our local police short of a 999 call, but rather better than telephone queuing to reach an operator based goodness knows where.*
- *Currently there are a number of crime prevention issues that need promoting, as well as a more general need to heighten awareness. We suggest there should be a Bruton Crime Prevention Week. We would need strong police support with their promotional vehicles, specialists to visit the more vulnerable, meetings, for instance, to re-energise Neighbourhood Watch schemes, a blitz on speeding, involvement with the schools, as well as other activities. Everyone would be made aware of crime prevention, and what part they can play.*

7.2.3 Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)

This is a new and very welcome appointment to assist the police and community. It will take time to find the best way for our PCSO to function.

- *The PCSO must be in support of the police and not a substitute for police presence and action.*
- *The PCSO's deployment in time, place and role should be an agreement jointly between the police and the Council.*
- *In time the PCSO might be able to coordinate certain community activity, for example, Speed Watch.*
- *It is not the job of the PCSO to become involved in confrontational situations. He or she has, however, an important role to play in community policing. If this*

appointment is to be successful in helping us with problems, such as traffic, minor crime and youth behaviour, then it must have our wholehearted support.

- *PCSO have certain designated powers including confiscation and issuing some fixed penalty notices. These powers are likely to increase over time, and we should welcome this.*

7.2.4 Road Safety

Enforcement of traffic laws and regulations is of particular concern in Bruton, with its road system inadequate for modern use. Control of such hazards as speed and weight is the aim of warning signs, road marking and layout. Ensuring these are adhered to requires policing.

- *Statistics held by the police should play a greater role in planning what measures are needed to make our town roads safer. Limited funding is not always best spent on emotionally charged or single issue schemes.*
- *Speeding is a common concern in the community. Limits are needed but they must be sensibly placed or they will not be respected.*
- *Policing speed limits is labour intensive for the police and thus PCSOs and the Speed Watch initiative are important back-up support.*
- *Parking control should be a PCSO commitment.*
- *More accidents occur in the High Street than elsewhere in Bruton. This highlights the need for concentrating effort at improving this road.*

7.3 Crime Prevention and Safety Initiatives

There are a number of community self-help initiatives which we might take to make the town safer.

7.3.1 Lighting and Closed Circuit TV (CCTV)

Neither of these ostensibly simple measures is as straightforward as it seems, and both are expensive.

- *Improved lighting is commendable. However, this can bring with it light pollution, capital and maintenance costs, and the danger of disfigurement of the historic town centre. Existing lighting which is better positioned and directed might bring better improvement than increasing numbers of lampposts. A street lighting 'audit' would point up the way this could be satisfactorily and economically achieved.*
- *We need to consider movement-triggered lighting in lesser used thoroughfares such as the Bartons, although this is complicated by their being in part on private property, as well as in isolated areas such as Jubilee Park.*

- *CCTV can be an effective deterrent. It has, however, attendant drawbacks and problems. Because of lens quality and lighting it can rarely be used for prosecuting offenders. Improved picture quality is heavily dependant on improved lighting, but do we want to flood the High Street with light? Our road and footpath system would require a large number of cameras around the town for CCTV to be effective. Cameras and their support structure are costly and ugly. The system would be prohibitively costly to monitor in real time and thus they would be primarily a warning to troublemakers rather than provide a response to trouble. We need to think carefully about cost-effectiveness before committing funds to a CCTV system.*
- *It is worth considering placing a recording camera in the area of the Jubilee Park Pavilion.*
- *The station camera operated by Wessex Trains has proved its worth. We would though urge more vigorous and timely follow-up action if vandals are to be deterred.*

7.3.2 Watch Schemes

These schemes come in and out of fashion, principally because their success is dependent on the drive and enthusiasm of a single person or a very small group. There are, we believe, two schemes which are widely beneficial and need continuing support.

- *Neighbourhood Watch can be reassuring and when working well and with wide participation from residents, is a real deterrent to crime, particularly burglary. The more effective schemes are extremely local so that participants feel they have a stake in its success. We should revisit Neighbourhood Watch in Bruton and seek community support in a number of small localised schemes.*
- *Speed Watch, as has already been suggested, brings almost instant reduction in speeding. To have a long term success it requires follow up action by the police to issue warning letters for repeat offenders.*

8. A SHARING COMMUNITY

Accessing information and influencing decisionmaking

Sharing is all about gaining benefit in return for contributing benefit. It is often said that what you put into life is what you get out of it. Cliché it may be but it is as true of our community in Bruton, as it is of anywhere. We, each of us, need to consider what contribution we might make to community life, whether it be directly, perhaps as a town councillor, or indirectly possibly by volunteering to assist in the provision of community care, sport or leisure activities. Only then should we seek to look for the numerous benefits offered to us through the services and recreational opportunities that are provided in the town. It is these opportunities which contribute so significantly to our ability to live an enjoyable, healthy and rewarding life.

8.1 Contributing

School, work and family life all depend on individual endeavour to function smoothly and effectively. A community as a social group is no different. There are a myriad ways of contributing to this common cause, and it is a responsibility we should all feel able to accept.

8.2.1 The Town Council

Councillors, among other responsibilities, debate local issues and make decisions on behalf of the community. It is therefore necessary that this process is transparent, which is achieved through public meeting and published minutes, and that they are accountable for their decisions to the community. Being a town councillor is an important and responsible service to the town.

- *Town councillors represent the community, and should ideally as a body be representative of the community - a mix of the older and experienced and the younger with perhaps a more radical view, and mirroring the social make up of those who live and work in Bruton. They carry responsibility for many town amenities, ensure that local government services are adequately deployed, and are consulted on a wide range of policy and planning issues. A councillor is elected for four years, but is able to stand for re-election. Becoming a councillor, who is independently minded and willing to accept responsibility, should be a consideration for the many and not the few.*
- *If possible, specific portfolios covering the Council's principal responsibilities should be delegated to individual councillors. This carries the advantages of more detailed knowledge and understanding of important aspects of the Council's work, longer term planning issues being successfully followed through, and as a point of contact for residents on particular matters.*
- *Addressing the concerns of youth through local initiatives continues to be a challenge with all communities. It is difficult to find willing representative youth voices and even more difficult to prioritise a wide range of 'wants',*

some fashion-led and others frighteningly expensive. While acknowledging the problem, we must continue to seek solutions. We believe another attempt should be made to form a Youth Council, with perhaps representation from each end of the town and each school. It should be formally convened but informally led, meeting perhaps once a term. Ideas could be discussed and their merits debated, grievances aired, and priorities agreed for the town council to debate.

- *Funding is the fuel that drives our local services and amenities. The more we have the further we can go: the less we have the slower we progress, losing the benefits we aspire to. Funding comes from both central government and council tax, and there is never enough of either. Our town's share of the overall budget must be spent wisely and demonstratively cost effectively. This comes from planning and prioritizing. However, there is also grant funding available, providing opportunity for additional spending to support and develop community life. In many ways grant funding is competitive - limited amounts are bid for by numerous applicants. In order to obtain grant funding we must identify opportunity at an early stage and prepare a sound, well argued and costed case for its benefit to the town. We have not always been good at this in the past.*

8.2.2 Personal Involvement

Although our town councillors are at the forefront of contributing to the community, there is plenty of opportunity, perhaps even some obligation, for all of us as individuals to also become involved, even in very small ways.

- *Voting is a regular part of our lives. Voting for town and district councillors every four years, voting for county councillors in different years, and voting for our MP and MEP. It is easy to be apathetic and even cynical, but voting is having a say in how we live our lives and having a voice in how we shape our future. Everyone needs to use their vote.*
- *There are in Bruton, as there are in other communities, a wide range of services and amenities almost entirely dependent for their functioning on volunteers from the community. It is usually comparatively easy to find people willing to contribute to running special interest societies and clubs, and these are thriving in Bruton. It is, however, more difficult to find people with the time and inclination to help with a number of visiting and caring services, and with coaching and administering sports and youth activities. These are each and all to a large degree dependent on volunteers from within the community. Some require a commitment of no more than a couple of hours a week, while others may be half a day. It is therefore possible to accommodate most volunteers' interest and available time. Every member of the community should consider how they might help by some form of limited voluntary contribution.*

8.3 Communicating

In the past decade communication has been revolutionized, making it almost unbelievably fast and easy to send or receive information in a multitude of ways. Yet within our relatively small community local information is still conveyed largely by the traditional methods of poster, noticeboard and parish magazine. It is also true that at the same time the amount of information available to us has multiplied many times over, including information relevant to life in our own community. Some degree of help perhaps lies in looking afresh at how we coordinate and disseminate information locally.

8.3.1 Collating information

Ideally we should each receive only that information we need. As such closely targetted information is in reality impractical then at least we should try to be selective. There are several ways of doing this. We can have a central information point, for example, the Community Office or the Library, which allows us to chose what information we need. We could receive information by requesting it rather than it being given to us speculatively, for instance by using a directory. Alternatively, we can all receive everything and evaluate its worth at our leisure, which is an expensive and wasteful option. Our first consideration might therefore be what is the best method of delivering particular information.

- *We should also start simplifying our access to information by grouping together similar subjects, for example sport, leisure activities, health, employment and learning, and community services (such things as crime prevention, waste collection, timetables, etc.). This sort of breakdown is appropriate to noticeboards, local newsletters, and directories.*
- *Our second consideration might be how we present information selectively.*
- *Thirdly, we should consider subdividing information according to its urgency. Contact telephone numbers have a reasonably long life, timetables tend to be medium term, while short-term information might be notice of a meeting. Such considerations will guide us as to where information is placed. Long life information might be available on demand from a local directory. That which is medium term might appear in a local periodic magazine or newsletter. Short-term information is best displayed on a noticeboard or poster.*
- *Some information can date quickly, and by doing so destroy confidence in allied information. Frequent updating is expensive, for instance, reprinting directories. It is therefore necessary to keep long-term information very basic, but short-term information detailed. This should be the fourth consideration in providing clear and easily accessible information.*

8.3.2 Disseminating Information

Dissemination is the means of carrying information between sender and recipient. Ease of access, relevance and clarity are all needed, but at a reasonable cost.

- *We lack a community noticeboard. The Library board is solely concerned with town council business, which leaves everything else either in our church magazine with a limited circulation and bi-monthly publication, or notices and messages in our shop or Community Office windows. We need vandal-proof noticeboards at possibly Church Bridge Green, between Alldays and the road, and in the area of the dental surgery. Each of these sites would have the benefit of convenience for the majority of people.*
- *Both the bi-monthly Parish magazine, Decibells with a limited circulation, and the currently intermittent Town News, offer useful information. However, neither are satisfactory in providing regular, detailed and topical information to everyone. We badly need a monthly town newsletter of, say, four or more A4 pages which carries information of short and medium-term interest, divided into categories, and carrying advertising to support its cost. It could be, as in other communities, produced commercially on behalf of the town council and supported by limited advertising.*
- *The town directory 'Discovering Bruton' aims to provide long-term information in an attractive format. However, in our opinion it is incomplete, dates quickly because it is costly to update, is difficult to handle, is too expensive to double as a free tourist handout, and as in any loose-leaf pocket format, it risks loss of its contents. We need an annual directory for the town containing long-term information divided by subject. It would contain not only Bruton contact information but also information to access other services in the area relevant to our community. It would also double as a Bruton business directory. This would be a 'budget' publication available at the Community Office and Library, and by request for modest payment.*
- *Train and bus timetables should be displayed in the Community Office and Library, as well as available as leaflet timetables. A list of taxi and mini-cab contacts should be kept in the Community Office.*
- *The Community Office and Library display leaflets in bewildering variety and interest. They would be more accessible if they were grouped by subject, or by local or other interests further afield. Similarly, the display of leaflets and noticeboard information in the surgery would benefit from some logical order.*
- *The town Internet site contains much useful information, particularly for visitors. It has a growing importance as a source of information accessible from home, and as a marketing tool for the town. In time, we should consider expanding this site to include short-term information, for instance, a town What's On diary.*

- *A single 'official' map of Bruton is needed, which can be used by the council, residents, businesses, schools, visitors, estate agents, societies and clubs, etc. We currently have an assortment of maps of the town varying widely in their appeal, clarity and accuracy. It should be A4 in size for cheap and easy reproduction, with one side an area map to the boundaries of the town, and the other an enlarged map of the centre.*

8.3.3 The Community Office

The Community Office, principally funded by the District Council, aims to provide a one-stop shop for advice and information. It is, in our opinion, one of our most valuable community assets, and we need to ensure that we create maximum value from it.

- *For the wide-ranging role given to it, the Community Office is too small, although its central location is ideal. We should investigate expanding it into the Town Council Office and moving the latter, or moving the Community Office to other nearby premises. We appreciate that this latter option is costly and it may therefore be more cost-effective to find a new town council office, although we have a nominal stake in the ownership of the current building.*
- *The Community Office should be welcoming and not intimidating. An occupied desk as the first thing that greets a visitor can, however well meant, be off-putting. We should aim for a relaxed, helpful and efficient atmosphere.*
- *There should be a small meeting room. This only need be a partitioned area, but it would ensure privacy. It is currently very difficult for visiting advisors to discuss health, legal, employment and educational matters with people, when it is at a table in the middle of a crowded room in the Library, itself open only for part of the week. It is discouraging to those who perhaps most need help and advice.*
- *Presentation within the Community Office needs revisiting. There is a large amount of information displayed or stored but its value is diminished by confusing presentation or hidden availability. A radical rethink of how to store and retrieve information, and how to offer, and encourage, fast and easy access to it is recommended.*
- *The Community Office should, if possible, be open on days and at times to suit the community. As a tourist information centre it needs to be open, at least in the spring, summer and autumn, everyday including at weekends and public holidays. We understand that the District Council currently funds only four mornings a week, and any additional opening is dependent on new funding or volunteers.*
- *The Community Office lacks a letterbox when the grill to the adjacent passage is closed.*

9. ACTION SUMMARY

This part of our report summarises what action we believe should now be considered by the Town Council. As we are making nearly 300 suggestions, comments and recommendations we have had, because of limited space, to be selective. However, all our major points are included.

Many recommendations will be comparatively simple and quick to implement, but others will take longer and some require considerable funding. Notwithstanding this we have indicated a timescale within which implementation might realistically be achieved. We have used the abbreviation **S** for short term, say within the next eighteen months; **M** for medium term, perhaps over two or three years; and **L** for a longer timescale. This is not an indication of priorities for action, which the Council will decide. For instance, a long term aim might require an immediate start, or a short term aim need to await an annual grant.

We have also indicated where responsibility for each initiative might lie, and have abbreviated Town Council to **TC** and District Council to **DC**.

With such a large number of recommendations we believe that the next logical step should, where necessary, be to allot each initiative an outline budget. This is not the same as costing each project but an indication of what sort of funding might be required. Following this, and hopefully with community involvement, a list of priorities for action could then be drawn up.

We recognise that events and time will inevitably change priorities, and that new initiatives will be added while others will be dropped. However, perhaps an annual report on achievements and progress would be helpful in moving Bruton forward.

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
2.2.1	Planning policy	M	Produce outline plan taking into account new strategic plans.	TC
2.3.1	Liaise with neighbouring parishes	S	Use this report for first meeting	TC
	Upgrade Bruton signs	S	Commission or hold competition for new design	TC
2.3.2	Signing of Dovecote	M	Involve NT and integrate with Abbey Park	TC
	Abbey Park explanation	M	Agree what is required and division of responsibilities	TC & Trust
2.3.3	Jubilee Park charges	S	Negotiate with Visitors	TC
	Control of misuse	S	Review security of access. Involve NT and Visitors	TC
	Tree planting	S	Implement current plans	TC
2.3.4	Riverside maintenance	M	Draw up and agree maintenance plan	DC
2.3.5	Tree fund	S	Work with Horticultural Society and set up fund	TC
	Landscape enhancement	M	Decide on scope of survey and commission	TC
2.3.6	Complete leaflets of walks	S	Encourage completion and consider additions	TC
	Cycle routes leaflets	M	Commission enthusiast	TC
	Signing of footpaths	M	Review signing and where necessary repair and improve	TC
	Display map of walks and rides	M	Collate information and commission	TC
2.4.1	Appraisal of heritage	L	Request Bruton Trust project	TC & Trust

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
2.4.2	High Street development plan	S	Form committee and seek expert help	TC
	Painting guide	S	Update and promote	TC
	Maintenance of buildings	M	Review available help	DC
2.4.3	Design Statement	M	Request Bruton Trust project	TC & Trust
	Publicise planning	S	Community Hall exhibition?	TC
2.4.4	New Development	M	Consider and outline requirements. Monitor	TC
	Planning gain	M	Cost and prioritise choices	TC
2.4.5	Light industrial units	L	Identify demand and earmark possible site	DC
	Promote inward investment	M	Draw up promotional plan	TC & DC
2.4.6	Liaison with schools	S	Arrange Heads meeting to discuss this Report. Thereafter Bursar level	TC & schools
	Safe routes to school	S	Draw up with schools and promote	TC & schools
2.5.1	Natural resources appraisal	M	Invite schools project	TC & schools
2.5.2	Litter bins	S	Identify requirement, allot funding and order	TC & DC
	Town cleaning days	S	Develop into regular initiatives	TC & schools
	Street cleaning	S	Discuss how improvements can be made	TC & DC
	Changes to collection arrangements	M	Meeting with DC	TC & DC
	Re-site recycling point	M	Agree with DC	TC & DC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
3.1.1	Train timetables	S	Discuss with Wessex Trains	TC
	More information at station	M	Discuss with Wessex Trains	TC
	Further station improvements	M	Negotiate with landowner and involve Wessex Trains	TC
3.1.2	Bus timetabling	M	Discuss with bus company	TC
	Bus shelters	M	Discuss with bus company	TC
	Bus route maps	S	Discuss with bus company	TC
3.1.3	CAT bus	S	Negotiate with DC	TC & DC
3.1.4	Taxis	S	Check any legal problems and draw up list	TC
3.2.1	Weight limit signing	S	Review with SCC	TC
	Exempt scheme	S	Review	TC
	Restricting delivery times	S	Discuss with Chamber of Commerce	TC
	Information on restrictions	M	Discuss with SCC	TC
3.2.2	Parking black spots	M	Review with SCC	TC
	Enforce parking regulations	S	Enlist support of DC	TC, DC & PCSO
	Additional parking	S	Move of recycling point and assess Lower Backway	TC & DC
	Signing for visitors	S	Identify requirements and request DC action	TC & DC
3.2.3	Downgrade A359 speed limits	S	Discuss with SCC	TC
	Speed limits	M	Raise volume with SCC	TC
	High Street traffic management plan	M	Discuss plans with SCC and integrate with 2.4.2	TC
	Speed warnings	S	Request to SCC	TC
	Speed watch	S	Request police to enhance and broaden scheme	TC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
4.1.1	Funding for playgroups	S	Promote in Town News	TC
	Meadow School relocation	S	Discuss with Meadow School	TC
	Support for parents	S	Arrange meeting between schools and health advisors	TC
4.1.2	Walking to school	S	Discuss promotional plan with schools	TC
	School Governors	M	Publicise	TC
	Integration with community	M	Discuss with schools how this can be positively achieved	TC & schools
4.1.3	Access to information	S	Discuss with relevant agencies and co-ordinate promotional plan	TC & SCC
4.1.4	Promotion of courses	S	Meeting with Advisor to promote for new term	TC
4.2.1	Careers advice	S	Arrange local meeting with agencies and advisors	TC
	On-the-job training	S	Ask Chamber of Commerce to write to all employers	TC
	Help for part-time employment	M	Ask Chamber of Commerce to write to all employers	TC
	Employment vacancies	S	Review with agencies a new plan and implement asap	TC
	Work experience	S	Discuss with schools and through Chamber of Commerce invite employer participation	TC
4.2.2	Half day closing	S	Invite Chamber of Commerce to discuss with businesses	TC
	Promote shopping	S	Invite ideas through Chamber of Commerce	TC
	New Shops	M	Identify popular demand, draw up a prospectus and target potential businesses	TC & DC
4.2.3	Encourage new enterprise	M	Draw up prospectus and promote	TC & DC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
4.2.4	Chamber of Commerce	S	Discuss enhanced role with Chamber	TC
	Business Directory	M	Ask Chamber to start collating and agree date for publication	TC
	Bruton logo	M	Discuss with Chamber	TC
	Re-launch of Chamber of Commerce	S	Discuss with Chamber and seek support from councils and agencies	TC & DC
4.3.1	Co-ordinate tourism	S	Draw up local plan and then involve agencies	TC
	Bruton leaflet	S	Commission new ideas and progress	TC
	Wider promotion of tourism	M	Draw up plan and cost; seek support from agencies	TC
	Website	S	Identify funding and requirements	TC
4.3.2	Community office opening	S	Discuss with DC and invite volunteers	TC & DC
	Town Map	S	Commission and widely distribute	TC
	Signing to Community Office	S	Request help from DC	TC
4.3.3	Listings for visitors	S	Commission	TC
	Campsite	M	Identify possible sites, discuss with owners and DC	TC
4.3.4	Local leaflets	S	Commission new series	TC
	Heritage trail	M	Devise with Bruton Trust and commission leaflet	TC & Trust
	Explanation for Parks	M	Discuss with Bruton Trust and identify funding and support	TC & Trust
	Museum	M	Review and plan for future	TC & DC
	Exploit events	M	Discuss with organisers	TC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
5.1.1	Development of Surgery	L	Discuss requirements with Surgery	TC
	Information at Surgery	S	Request review	Surgery
	Liaison with community	S	Request review	Surgery
5.1.2	Dental practice	S	Discuss requirements with Practice	TC
5.1.3	Promotion of services	S	Discuss with Surgery	TC
	Responders	S	Establish current situation and discuss with Responders and Surgery	TC
	First aid training	S	Invite St John Ambulance or similar, and publicise	TC
5.1.4	Keep Fit	S	Establish requirement and if demand seek enthusiasts to organise	TC
5.2.1	Support for parents	S	Discuss with Health Visitor and Surgery to promote	TC
5.2.2	Target information and help	S	With help of Surgery identify need and names	TC
	Good neighbours	S	Promote locally	TC
	Vulnerability of elderly	S	Draw up and maintain list	TC
	Volunteer drivers	S	Invite community to contribute and keep list	TC
	Day Centre support	S	Discuss with organiser	TC
	Care home	L	Draw up prospectus and promote	TC
5.3.1	Sale of Vicarage	S	Support PCC	TC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
6.1.1	Multi-use Games Area	M	Identify site, draw up plans with DC and seek funding	TC & DC
	Pavilion	M	Ask Trustees to draw up plans for future enhancement	TC
	Joint use of school facilities	M	Discuss with schools	TC
6.2.1	Improved funding for key sports	M	Organise meeting with sports organisers at DC	TC & DC
	Publicity for sports	S	Discuss potential and means with organisers	TC
6.3	Care and maintenance of rights of way	M	Consider setting up a self-help group, and allocate funding	TC
	Extend riverside walk	L	Make plan and discuss with landowners	TC
	Signing for riders	S	Identify need, involve interested parties, and source funding	TC
	Display cycle map	M	Commission	TC
	Skateboard park	M	Identify site and discuss with committee	TC
	Swimming pool	L	Discuss with schools	TC
	Town Event	M	Invite ideas	TC
6.4.1	Develop Bruton Festival of Arts Week	M	Discuss with organisers	TC
	Improve Library	M	Draw up plans for move and/or enhancement	TC & SCC
	Town archives	L	Invite support of Museum and agree a plan	TC
6.4.2	New Community Centre	L	Set up a committee to plan and to identify potential sites	TC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
6.5.1	Youth Club	M	Set up an action (not a discussion) committee	TC & DC
	Youth sport	M	Ask schools for help	TC
	Youth sponsorship	M	Discuss with Mill on the Brue	TC
	Transport	S	Plan a new initiative and source funding	TC
6.5.2	Drop-in centre	M	Decide location, scope and funding	TC
	Graffiti board	M	Consider site and funding, including maintenance	TC
	Review ideas for action	S	Prioritise and use as check list	TC
7.1.1	Awareness of crime	S	Discuss with police and publicise	TC
	Anti-crime initiatives	M	Discuss priorities with police and agree promotion	TC
	Warning signs	S	Agree with DC	TC & DC
	Advice on crime	S	Promote to target residents without causing alarm	TC & Police
	Campaigns	M	Agree with police	TC
7.1.2	Combatting vandalism	M	Ensure it is part of planning	TC
	Volunteering information	S	Publicise	TC
7.1.3	Publicise helplines	S	Plan, with DC, an ongoing publicity campaign	TC & DC
	Sale of alcohol	M	Discuss with retailers and pubs	TC
	Pub Watch	S	Monitor, with police	TC
	Licensing	M	Be tough	TC
	New By-law	M	Discuss with police and consider	TC

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
7.2.1	Local policing	S	Discuss improvements with police	TC
	Police response	S	Discuss action with police	TC
7.2.2	Relationship with police	S	Invite positive steps for closer co-operation with police	TC & Police
	Local Action Team	S	Set up asap	TC
	Crime Prevention Week	M	Organise with police and DC	TC, DC & Police
7.2.3	PCSO	S	Discuss with police	TC
7.2.4	Planning for road safety	S	Hold meeting with police to identify problems and draw up a medium-term plan of action	TC
	Speeding	S	Plan positive action with police and SCC	TC & SCC
	High Street safety	S	Include in plan for improvements to High Street	TC
7.3.1	Lighting audit	M	Commission review and draw up plan	TC
	PIR lighting	M	Consider in a new plan, and publicise to property owners	TC
	CCTV	M	Identify and cost requirements	TC
7.3.2	Neighbourhood Watch	S	Review current scheme, plan expansion and re-launch	TC & Police
	Speed Watch	S	Expand scheme	TC & Police

Report Section	Recommendation	Time Scale	Action	Responsibility
8.2.1	Delegate responsibilities	S	Allocate portfolios	TC
	Youth Council	M	Draw up plan and fix date for introduction	TC
	Application for funding support	M	Invite expert advice and possibly presentation to councillors	TC
8.2.2	Volunteering	M	Publicise and hold meeting to discuss or invite names	TC
8.3.1	Presenting information	M	Consider options, invite discussion	TC
8.3.2	Community noticeboards	S	Investigate potential sites and design, cost and allocate funding	TC
	Newsletter/Magazine	M	Decide on preferred option, discuss with interested parties, appoint publisher	TC
	Annual directory	M	Investigate feasibility and decide on format and funding	TC
8.3.3	Availability of information	M	Review where and how information can best be displayed and accessed	TC
	Expand Internet site	M	Agree requirements, cost and source funding	TC
	Town map	S	Commission and encourage exclusive use	TC
	Development of Community Office	M	Draw up plan for both short-term and long-term improvement	TC
8.3.3	Meeting room	M	Part of development plan	TC
	Opening times	S	Discuss funding with DC and invite volunteer help	TC
	Letterbox	S	Decide on work required with DC, and commission	TC & DC

10. ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

We distributed just over 1,000 copies of the Questionnaire to each household in Bruton in late November 2004. A total of 312 were completed and returned. Many of these included separate returns from individuals within a single household, and as a result we had a response from 732 residents of all ages, although not everyone completed every question.

In total 62 questions were included, with some requesting multiple answers. There were, therefore, more than 40,000 pieces of data to be collated, analysed and evaluated. The full results are available for inspection in the Community Office but we give here a summary of the main findings.

Of those households returning the Questionnaire 76% were owner occupied, 10% were rented and 7% were housing association accommodation. Only 3.5% were looking for alternative housing, the majority hoping to find a house or flat within the town.

There were 65 children of primary school age or younger and 53 of secondary or middle school age. 51 were studying at sixth form college, university or on vocational courses.

Those replying were 27% retired, 60% between the ages of 25 and 65, which we assumed to be those in employment, and the remainder were in education. This, we felt, was probably a fairly accurate reflection of the Community as a whole.

It was interesting that 30% had lived in Bruton for more than 20 years and only a slightly smaller percentage for less than five years. Half lived here either because of their employment or education, and half because they felt it was an attractive place.

Only 2% stated that they were unemployed, and 14% said they were self-employed, which was less than we had expected. Of the 5% seeking employment, the majority were looking for professional/technical work, and a majority relied on 'word of mouth' or the local paper to find a job. There was a requirement for local childcare to enable a parent to work part-time. People believed we should encourage small business growth or tourism, with fewer willing to encourage small-scale industry.

Cars were, not surprisingly, overwhelmingly used for leisure and shopping, and less for business or commuting. Buses were used mainly for occasional shopping or leisure, and trains generally the same. Only 1.8% were regular users of a bus for work, excluding children travelling to school, and 3.5% the train. However, cost was not apparently a problem. Taxi use was minimal.

There was significant support for parking controls, for downgrading the A359 Frome to Yeovil road, and for improved road safety, principally in Quaperlake Street although other areas scored highly too.

Homes for young people and small family houses were reckoned to be a requirement, but 157 respondents did not want more housing in the Town.

A large number of respondents wanted better policing with a more visible presence, particularly in the evenings. Traffic issues were not unexpectedly about speed, heavy vehicles and parking. People also believe action is needed to reduce vandalism, alcohol abuse and graffiti. Lower Backway was where most people felt unsafe, followed by the Alldays area and the High Street at night.

Nearly 15% of those replying were not registered with any dentist and only 28% of those that were registered were with the Bruton practice. Transport to hospital is or had been a problem for 285 respondents. The local Surgery was judged good by 74% and poor by only 2%. Some 83 people had health or disability problems.

Local shops were relatively well used - by 45% of respondents weekly - and nearly half making regular use of the Post Office and Pharmacy. There was a majority wish for a hardware shop and a baker, followed by a clothes shop, a coffee/wine bar, a bookshop, a fruit and vegetable shop, a haberdasher and a shoe shop. The reasons for using local shops were said to be to support them, rather than being good value. Shoppers particularly appreciated convenience and saving time. Some two-thirds of respondents used the Library or a restaurant.

There were no strong feelings about our sports facilities, either good or bad, with 57% saying they did not take part in any sporting activity. A swimming pool was the most popular addition that people wanted, followed by a skate park, a gym and a sports hall. Many people complained of a lack of information.

Over 60% were enthusiastic for the Town to have its own modern well-equipped Community Centre, with a high proportion willing to support a wide range of uses.

Few people found information about what was going on in Bruton to be good - only 15% - and most used shop window notices to gain news. Only 21% had attended a Council meeting, but of these most felt the issues discussed reflected local concerns. Practically no-one thought that the Council publicized its decisions adequately. Nearly 40% did not know how their local tax was spent, but over 30% would be prepared to pay a slightly higher tax to meet local needs.

Regarding protection of the local environment, over 60% of respondents wished for a reduction in traffic, and not many fewer wanted more recycling, improved public transport and more local employment to reduce commuting. The vast majority believed our historic built environment was important or very important, and surprising to us, 59% said they would accept wind turbines as ecologically desirable.

Litter was considered to be a problem mostly in the parks, the High Street and around Alldays. Other litter black-spots were the Bartons and Backways. Nearly three-quarters of those replying would welcome more litter bins, and half felt more road sweeping was needed. Nearly 36% would support a bi-annual 'Spring Cleaning Day' around the Town.

Local footpaths were known to about half of those who replied, with 120 willing to help maintain them. A third did not think they were well signed. There was enthusiastic support for local footpath maps and leaflets, and for special interest or guided walks.

Some 47% of respondents would like to see town/school relationships continue to develop. This was particularly seen as sharing facilities and as regular meetings.

Finally 70% wished Bruton to continue primarily as a working community, with strong support for tourism, and 29% wished the Town to stay much as it is.

The last question invited comments or ideas for the future. A long and very varied wish-list resulted, but the most popular improvements concerned traffic, particularly speeding and parking, crime and vandalism, and litter. The complete list has been passed to the Town Council.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been compiled with the contribution of many people within and outside the community of Bruton. Their time, their knowledge and experience, and their support have been generously given over the past year. While space precludes naming all those who have contributed there are some whose particular input should not go unacknowledged.

Firstly, I must thank my fellow committee members, some of whom stayed for the long haul and others who gave their time as and when they could. They are my co-signatories to this report.

Secondly, I must thank the Mayor and Council for their patience and support for our work. This said we involved them directly as little as possible as a matter of principle in preparing an independent report.

Then we must thank all those in the Community who have helped us. This includes those whom we have interviewed, those who have attended our special interest meetings and those who contributed their views either directly or through our questionnaire. This is very much their report.

Fourthly, we must thank those members of the District Council who have encouraged and helped us, and in particular Tim Cook, their Development Officer. In addition, we have had help from the County Council, the Community Council for Somerset and The Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

Then there were those individuals who researched and collated information for us, and who administered to our needs as a committee, from word processing to refreshments.

This exercise has taken us nearly a year. We have sought to pace ourselves, partly because of our need to amass and digest a lot of information but also because the great majority of those involved have other responsibilities and calls upon their time. As a committee we have all learnt more about our town and its community than we could have imagined a year ago. Occasionally we felt challenged but always confident that this was an exercise that was worth doing. We ended unanimous in our feelings that we were lucky to live in Bruton.

Malcolm Hord
Chairman

12. ABBREVIATIONS

CAT	Community Accessible Transport
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
DC	South Somerset District Council
Development Plan	a plan providing a detailed policy framework for development
L	Long term
Local Plan	District level development plan
M	Medium term
NHS	National Health Service
NT	National Trust
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PIR	Passive Infra-Red
S	Short term
SCC	Somerset County Council
SSDC	South Somerset District Council
TC	Bruton Town Council