KEY ISSUE:
The County Council has adopted a policy to promote individual and community self reliance. Local Committees have a role in identifying communities with particular needs and ensuring that services give appropriate attention to meeting these.

SUMMARY:
This paper updates members with the work carried out by the North Walton Partnership, outlines proposals for expansion of this work into other areas of Elmbridge from April 2005, and requests member support to help fund the costs of a member of staff to co-ordinate and drive forward this work.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:
Members are requested:

i) To note the progress of self reliance in Elmbridge;

ii) To comment on proposals to extend self reliance work into other parts of Elmbridge from April 2005; and

iii) To recommend to the Executive that Surrey County Council contribute a total of £24,000 towards the cost of employing an officer to co-ordinate and drive forward self reliance work in Elmbridge for two years from 1st April 2005.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Local Committee paper – 23 April 2002
1. **BACKGROUND:**

1.1 The County Council has adopted a policy to promote individual and community self reliance by:

- Targeting help on disadvantaged individuals and communities so that they can become more self-reliant and enjoy a better quality of life.
- Working at long-term solutions that will break the cycle of dependency.
- Working in partnership with other statutory organisations, the business community and the voluntary sector.

1.2 The principle approach adopted is to seek to target resources and activity in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner on those communities and groups which can be identified as being the most vulnerable.

1.3 As part of its role in monitoring the performance of County Council services in Elmbridge, the Local Committee is required to keep the social profile of the borough under review so that it can recommend ways in which services can most effectively meet the needs of those communities that, against an Elmbridge norm, can be demonstrated to be relatively disadvantaged.

2. **NORTH WALTON PARTNERSHIP**

2.1 To date the focus for self reliance work in Elmbridge has been the wards of Walton North and Walton Ambleside delivered under the umbrella of the North Walton Partnership. The Partnership was set up in 1999 and had a multi-agency officer steering group including representatives from Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, North Surrey Primary Care Trust, Surrey Police, the Elmbridge Housing Trust, the North West Surrey Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Rydens School and Brooklands College.

2.2 In the past year this steering group has been widened to include the Chairs of two local resident groups and members of Surrey County and Elmbridge Borough Councils.

2.3 The aim of the North Walton Partnership is to work together to improve the quality of life for people living in North Walton by supporting and strengthening community involvement and addressing social inequalities and it has set up a number of projects to do this. Critical to the success of the partnership has been the employment of someone to co-ordinate and drive forward the work programme. The post was vacant between December 2001 and July 2002 and this had a noticeable and detrimental impact on progress.

2.4 When the present Co-ordinator took up post in July 2002 she was given a clear brief to work more closely with the community to ensure that local people had greater involvement in the development of new projects and encouraged to take responsibility over time for running projects themselves.
It is not intended that the long-term success of individual projects should be dependent on the direct involvement of a paid member of staff.

2.5 Some of the projects and initiatives include:
- Healthy cooking on a budget
- Healthy walks
- Artist in residence
- Community wardens
- Tech Install
- Support group for vulnerable families
- Community football team for young people
- Audit of play facilities in North Walton

2.6 The Rugrats young parents group, originally developed through the North Walton Partnership, has now become virtually independent of the partnership, managing the project and securing funding themselves.

2.7 Residents groups have been established at Fieldcommon and Vicarage Fields so that local people can have their say. Training and support have been provided to enable these groups to produce their own newsletters.

2.8 Community Clean Up days are organised regularly with the support and involvement of residents (over one weekend last year more than eight tonnes of rubbish were disposed of).

2.9 Plans have recently been agreed to set up a weekly youth club at Fieldcommon with funding from the Reassurance Project. This is a need that was identified by local people who will be directly involved in running it.

3. **FUTURE SELF RELIANCE WORK IN ELMBRIDGE**

3.1 Although a lot of work has been done in North Walton, and with an increasing emphasis on capacity building in the community, there is still unmet need in the area and the steering group are keen that this area remains a priority for the moment so that this can be tackled. A clear exit strategy has been developed to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the work being done. From April 2005 the focus of self reliance work will shift to other areas of the borough, merely maintaining a watching brief on North Walton.

3.2 Work is underway by the Elmbridge Community Partnership to develop a detailed profile of Elmbridge that will identify other pockets of deprivation across the borough. The first stage of this work (an analysis of data from the 2001 Census and the Indices of Deprivation 2004) is now complete and is reported elsewhere on this agenda.

3.3 This analysis will be widely circulated to local SCC service managers and other agencies working in the borough through the Elmbridge Community Partnership. They will be invited to comment on the report in
the light of their own experiences of working in the borough and to contribute data of their own that will help to give a more detailed picture of areas that would benefit from further support.

3.4 Once this profile is completed the agencies represented on the North Walton Partnership would like to apply the lessons learnt through their work to other areas in the borough. This will also provide an opportunity to bring in new organisations. Later in the year it is anticipated that a borough-wide project board will be established by the Elmbridge Community Partnership to oversee the progress of this work.

3.5 The Community Support Team have had a student social worker from Brunel University on a part-time placement with us for a few months this year to provide a more qualitative approach to support the profiling work. As part of this he has been consulting with local people and members in Molesey South to get their views on the local area. In particular he organised an event with the Molesey Youth Club to identify what young people think.

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 If self reliance work is to keep going forward in Elmbridge it is essential that an effective and suitably qualified co-ordinator is in place to build links with the community, develop initiatives to meet community needs, and secure funding to cover project costs. If it is possible, continuity of employment is also important because staff changes inevitably lead to gaps in service delivery.

4.2 The present funding for the North Walton Partnership Coordinator runs out at the end of March 2005, and members of the steering group are trying to secure funding to employ a Coordinator for another two years.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 When the North Walton Partnership was established Surrey County Council agreed to contribute £12,000 per annum for three years towards the cost of employing a Co-ordinator. This arrangement started in 1999 and would have finished in March 2003 except that vacancy drift and the additional funding agreed in April 2002 (when County members of the Local Committee jointly contributed £8,000 from their local allocations) means the post is funded until the end of May 2004.

5.2 To extend the contract to the end of March 2005, Surrey County Council contributed an additional £10,000 from a small budget held centrally by the Community Support Service. This funding is to cover salary and direct overheads (pension, national insurance etc). It does not cover any contribution towards office costs, all of which are met directly by Elmbridge Borough Council who host the post on behalf of the partnership.

5.3 Other agencies have already agreed to continue contributing to this work for a further two years on the basis that all the partner agencies also agree to do so. The county has been asked to commit:
5.4 The Local Committee does not have a budget to support this kind of work so is asked to recommend to the Executive that the County Council agree to fund this valuable work in Elmbridge.

5.5 As ever, the NWP continues to be extremely successful in attracting external funding (in both cash and kind) into the area that far exceeds the cost of employing a Co-ordinator. The biggest financial input to the community comes via through the National Reassurance Project and the links with the work of the Partnership were a key factor in the original bid for this Home Office funding. The sponsorship with the highest profile is undoubtedly the Football Coaching Project supported by Chelsea Football Club.

5.6 In accordance with the County’s self reliance policy, all services are expected to show how they will focus their work (within existing budgets) to help improve the quality of life for residents living in the disadvantaged areas. For example, in response to requests from the community, the mobile library service agreed to visit Fieldcommon once a month from January 2004. If this is successful, visits will be made two-weekly from January 2005. The youth service are involved in developing new initiatives for young people in North Walton, including training local people to run the sessions.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The whole focus of work outlined in this report is concerned with the needs of vulnerable communities and the promotion of self reliance.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The Partnership aims to work closely with local residents and two residents groups have been established. The Co-ordinator works closely with the wardens and the Reassurance Manager to ensure that the community is consulted on community safety issues, and directly involved in initiatives to improve their own environment.

7.2 To help publicise the work of the NWP a newsletter is now produced twice a year and circulated locally to residents. Two consultation evenings have been held to which residents, councillors and other key stakeholders were invited. Feedback from these has been positive and it has been agreed that these will become a regular event.

7.3 Young people in Fieldcommon will be consulted over the development of the youth club, and it was in response to direct requests from young people that the football project was developed.
8. **COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Walton North was identified in the Community Safety Strategy 2002-05 as having the broadest spread of crime types and was one of the three pilot reassurance areas in 2002-03. It has now been designated as one of ten national pilot reassurance areas. The two community wardens (managed under the umbrella of the NWP) have been a key element in the strategy to reduce the fear of crime and minimise anti-social behaviour.

9. **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Many of the initiatives of the North Walton Partnership are designed to improve the physical environment and to educate children in the importance of appreciating and conserving the natural environment. They also encourage local people to get out and enjoy Elmbridge’s heaths and waterways.

10. **CONCLUSION**

10.1 Some excellent work has been carried out in North Walton over the past few years, work that is making a real difference to the day-to-day lives of an increasing number of residents. There is much more that can and will be done in the area, and in future years this work will be expanded to cover other pockets of deprivation across the borough.

10.2 However for self reliance work to be really successful, as it has been in North Walton, it is essential to have an officer in post to co-ordinate and drive the work. A good co-ordinator will ensure that local people are involved directly in shaping self reliance work, and that they get directly involved in projects acquiring new skills and knowledge along the way.

10.3 They can also help harness resources from a variety of agencies for the benefit of local people and certainly the North Walton Partnership Co-ordinator has been responsible for bringing in direct financial resources to the area far in excess of cost of employing her.