



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(GUILDFORD)**

**Self Reliance Update and Stronger Communities Strategy
Update**

13 December 2007

KEY ISSUE

To review progress made by Self Reliance projects in Guildford and to consider the future role of Surrey County Council in partnership social inclusion work across the borough.

SUMMARY

There have significant developments in the provision of social inclusion work in Guildford borough, and partners and communities face both challenges and opportunities in the forthcoming months to determine the future direction of the work

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to:

- (i) Note the progress of partnerships and projects in delivering social inclusion work
- (ii) Agree that the SCC Self Reliance policy and budget need urgent renewal to address issues of social exclusion in pockets of relative deprivation in Guildford borough
- (iii) Comment on ways in which Committee Members can contribute to and influence the new policy and resource for 2008 onwards.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The notion of “relative disadvantage”, characterised by the presence of small areas (not necessarily severely deprived on a national scale) within generally prosperous surroundings, is familiar in Guildford, and in Surrey as a whole. Costs of basic commodities and access to services tend to reflect the capacity and needs of the majority of the population and consequently intensify the exclusion of the relatively disadvantaged minority. At the same time a number of aspects of disadvantage are observed to cluster with low incomes in certain neighbourhoods, e.g. low educational attainment, reduced employment opportunities, poor environmental conditions, poor health and some community safety problems.
- 1.2 A recent national survey (**Poverty, wealth and place in Britain 1968-2005** Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2007) has drawn some conclusions on the nature of poverty and its persistence in certain areas, identifying evidence of an increasing polarisation between wealthy neighbourhoods and those at the opposite end of the income scale. On the whole, relative poverty in Guildford is not as intense as that experienced elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless there is underlying evidence of relative poverty. This means there is a possibility that certain communities in Guildford may continue to suffer from levels of multiple disadvantage which would, without appropriate support and intervention, impair their residents’ ability to participate in the opportunities available in the borough or contribute to the Surrey economy.
- 1.3 In its Corporate Plan 2007-2008 the County Council has expressed the following aspiration: “We want to provide people and their communities with services in ways that meet their needs, and promote equality of opportunity, self-reliance, and preventative approaches”. The Council’s self-reliance policy (2000) has been the principal vehicle for the authority’s activity in this field, aiming to:
- Target help on disadvantaged individuals and communities so that they can become more self-reliant and enjoy a better quality of life.
 - Work at long-term solutions which will break the cycle of dependency.
 - Work in partnership with other statutory organisations, the business community and the voluntary sector.
- 1.4 More recently the concept of promoting “Safer and Stronger Communities” has become enshrined within Surrey’s Local Area Agreement (LAA: 2005). While the emphasis has hitherto been focused on the “safer” element, there is an opportunity in framing the revised LAA to shift the balance towards the promotion of “stronger” communities. Communities that are cohesive and resilient are more able to resist and address local anti-social behaviour and thus in part contribute to the “safer” agenda. More fundamentally, they are also better equipped to fulfil the broader aspirations of cohesion,

sustainability and equality of opportunity set out in the Surrey in 2020 vision.

- 1.5 A central tenet of the approach to the promotion of self-Reliant / strong / inclusive communities in Surrey has been the need to improve the extent to which communities – particularly the most vulnerable – are engaged in identifying neighbourhood needs and are empowered and supported to work with statutory partners to shape locally relevant services. A key feature of this approach is enabling residents to take a lead in addressing issues in their own neighbourhoods and finding solutions that address those needs. This has often required an additional investment in community development workers and/or local premises, but services have been encouraged equally to “mainstream” responses to needs by re-aligning their delivery locally.
- 1.6 Finally, a number of the strands set out above are brought together in the “key lines of enquiry” against which the County Council will be assessed in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (2008). The Council will be required to provide evidence of the extent to which it has “. . . with its partners, achieved its ambitions for building safer and stronger communities . . .” and shown “. . . that it uses effective forms of community engagement to support informed user outcomes. There are formal structures and resources in place which ensure that community engagement and cohesion is reflected in the decisions taken by the council and constitutes a standard feature in the development of new policies”.
- 1.7 SCC’s Self Reliance policy and budget have previously delivered significant outputs and outcomes in Stoke and Westborough wards under the banner of the North Guildford Project, the Building Bridges Project and more recently the Healthy Living Programme.
- 1.8 The third most deprived area of Guildford i.e. Ash Wharf has not attracted similar funds, but some modest community development work has started there to address the significant needs of the area.
- 1.9 (The Healthy Living Programme previously deployed a Community Development worker in Guildford town centre, promoting health and wellbeing projects for the different types of community in the town, including vulnerable people with drug, alcohol and homelessness issues.)
- 1.10 Annexe A summarises the achievements of the Healthy Living Programme, and progress so far in Ash.
- 1.11 Self Reliance work in Guildford has now entered a new phase with some policy and funding challenges for the longer term.

2 UPDATE AND ANALYSIS – North Guildford

- 2.1 The Healthy Living Programme has achieved some notable successes in Stoke and Westborough wards in the last few years, building on previous work. Community Development workers in these two areas have worked alongside residents and partners to run over 100 community-based projects in which over 4000 people have participated.
- 2.2 Evaluation of the Programme found that there had been an increase in capacity and resilience within the community as a result of the community development and project work undertaken. Not only had individuals' (mental and physical) health improved, but their confidence to participate and contribute to the community had been enhanced, and their capacity for progression to further services, training or leadership roles in the groups had been augmented. (See Annexe A for more detail.)
- 2.3 The individuals working in the Healthy Living Programme were very well embedded in their communities and in the structures of agencies and partnerships aiming to address problems e.g. the Safer Guildford Partnership. The Healthy Living Programme maintained a strong ethos of community-led initiatives and created a positive sense of community. Annual celebrations brought residents and agencies together to acknowledge what was being achieved, and workers used the media effectively to create a more positive image of the communities.
- 2.4 Although (Big Lottery) funding for the Healthy Living Programme came to an end earlier this year, Local Committee funds (from the allocations of Fiona White and Pauline Searle) have allowed 2 Community Development Worker posts to be maintained in Stoke and Westborough wards until June 2008. No dedicated funding now exists for smaller community projects themselves and this is already being seen to be putting pressure on other budgets (Local Committee allocations, Safer Guildford funding).
- 2.5 Within the Healthy Living Programme, the previous management and back-office support as well as the town centre community development worker post are all no longer funded. The existing community development worker posts are hosted and line-managed by Surrey PCT, with direction and support provided by the continuing Management Committee.
- 2.6 The new workers have been in post since summer 2007 and are already working with communities, supporting projects and engaging community members in continuing the work of previous programmes.
- 2.7 A residents survey will soon be carried out in the two areas to refresh their understanding of what community members want. The survey will also provide some baseline data from which to measure the impact of their work.

- 2.8 Guildford Borough Council have indicated that further budgets from April 2008 are not yet guaranteed, advising that an application be made to the Voluntary Grants Panel to ensure that the funding burden is carried by SCC, GBC and PCT together.

2.9 UPDATE AND ANALYSIS – Ash

- 2.10 While many projects have been initiated in Ash over the years, it has never received the same consistent partnership approach to social inclusion that has been seen on North Guildford.
- 2.11 In 2006 the Local Partnerships Team and Healthy Living Programme conducted an audit of services in the area, focussing on voluntary sector provision. Findings of this audit showed that the following were needed:
- more youth provision
 - literacy and numeracy provision
 - Infrastructure support for the voluntary sector
 - better communication and information exchange
 - a higher profile and more positive identity for Ash

It was recommended that a paid part- or full-time community development post be created to co-ordinate community and partnership solutions to the above needs.

- 2.12 With funding for such a post being difficult to find in the current climate, some work has already been initiated to further assess the needs of the area and build stronger networks of agencies. A series of networking meetings has begun, bringing a wide range of agencies together. This is already beginning to meet the need identified above (i.e. for better information exchange and communication) as agencies are being made more aware of each others' provision in the area. One of the objectives of the network is to avoid duplication and use the strength of the network to enhance provision and extend its reach into the community. The Local Partnerships Team is providing administrative support for these meetings and facilitating the exchange of information around the network. Further meetings will focus on support for the Voluntary Sector, and enhancing provision for young people.
- 2.13 The ongoing work in North Guildford and Ash are brought together as the Stronger Communities project, one of the projects under the umbrella of the Local Strategic Partnership in Guildford, recognising the challenges and relative inequalities faced by some of the most deprived communities within the borough of Guildford.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee has in the past supported the continuation of the two named neighbourhood projects in Guildford (Westborough, Stoke

wards) as part of its contribution to the delivery of the County Council's self-reliance policy.

- 3.2 The Committee may now wish to use its influence to support within the County Council the development of a comprehensive, resourced Stronger Communities Strategy for 2008/9 and onwards. This would provide a sustainable framework for supporting and empowering communities, particularly those most affected by relative disadvantage.
- 3.3 In addition to the provision of generic community support, the Strategy would, on a joined-up neighbourhood basis, aim to cover mainstream action as appropriate in the following areas: intervention with children and families (via schools and/or Children's Centres), neighbourhood policing, young people, older people and those with disabilities, lifelong learning and skills, environment, community safety, transport and access to services, culture and leisure.
- 3.4 A draft Stronger Communities Strategy is being developed and it is anticipated that it will be presented to the County Council meeting on 22 January 2008. Additionally, a members' seminar is being planned for February 2008 to enable members to develop the new Strategy further, as well as clarifying their community leadership role within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- 3.5 Locally, the Committee may wish to indicate its support for the inclusion of specific actions to strengthen communities in the forthcoming updated Sustainable Community Strategy or Community Plan for Guildford. It is particularly emphasised that all of this work is planned and delivered across the key partner agencies involved in Guildford's Local Strategic Partnership, such as borough and district councils, the Police, the PCT, the voluntary sector and faith groups.
- 3.6 The risks of not maintaining a local County Council contribution to the promotion of stronger communities are considerable. Any decrease, or withdrawal, of County Council funding would severely jeopardise the viability of these projects, many of which have become well established and successful over a number of years.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 The projects and work being undertaken in North Guildford are carried out in consultation with residents, Members and partners, particularly those represented on the Healthy Living Programme Management Committee. The Community Development workers are conducting a short residents survey to refresh their understanding of the needs and capacity of the community.
- 4.2 Work in Ash has so far involved consulting with service providers, especially of voluntary and community groups, many of whom will be

resident in the area. Audit findings were validated by a group of key stakeholders. Further work of the network will involve consultations with community groups.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Funding for the Community Development Workers posts in North Guildford will end in the summer 2008.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The issues raised in the report have significant implications for significant groups in the community e.g. young people, older people, people on low incomes, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities (including Travellers), parents of young children.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The work of the Healthy Living Programme and fledgling work in Ash aim to contribute to Community Safety by building stronger and more self-reliant communities.

8 CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 While there have significant outcomes from the provision of social inclusion work in Guildford borough, partners and communities now face both challenges and opportunities in the forthcoming months to determine the future direction of the work. Members from across the borough, not just those representing the affected divisions, are asked to consider ways they can collectively support a sustainable approach to these challenges.

9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 9.1 See paragraph 3.4 above. Officers will pass on comments from Local Committee Members to colleagues developing the new Stronger Communities Strategy.

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GUILDFORD: SELF RELIANCE INITIATIVES

North Guildford

Following a phase of community development work and targeted intervention in relation to educational attainment during the 1990s in Westborough ward, a major self-reliance project in Westborough and Stoke wards was initiated in 2002, integrated with a lottery-funded Healthy Living Programme co-ordinated by the former Guildford and Waverley PCT. Both these wards contain areas which are among the five most disadvantaged in Surrey. Nearly 100 community-based projects and activities have been established since 2002 and over 4000 people have participated in activities to improve their mental, physical, community, environmental, financial and spiritual health:

Number of People involved in projects:

- 2003: 1154
- 2004: 2519
- 2005: 2145

Evaluation of the projects was undertaken in 2006, in the form of questionnaires to participants to gauge satisfaction and identify outcomes. 257 questionnaires were returned. The results show an increase in capacity and resilience within the community as a result of the community development and project work undertaken.

People were asked what they felt more able to do after taking part in the activity. Most people indicated that they felt more able to 'look after their health' (**114**) after taking part in the activity. A high number of people also mentioned that they felt more able to 'work better within a group' (**91**) and 'take part in community life' (**76**). In addition, the data shows a low number of people indicated that they felt more able to 'go on training courses' (**23**) and 'use other services' (**29**).

54% of people indicated that their physical health has improved.

71% of people stated that their mental or emotional health had improved.

54% of people stated that their relationships outside the group had improved.

53% of people stated that their feeling of safety within their community had increased.

56% of people stated that their skills had developed on the scale between 5-10.

66% of people stated that their confidence had developed.

SCC (LPT) has supported the strategic direction of this work via its place on the HLP Management committee. Lottery funding has now expired and funding for community development workers and projects is needed to ensure ongoing community capacity-building can take place. The project is funded by the County Council and Guildford Borough Council until March 2008 and a challenge exists as to whether the project can be sustained through

mainstreaming or whether continued additional funding can be raised locally. A learning outcome from this project is that activity can be better targeted in discrete neighbourhoods, as opposed to large-scale multi-ward areas.

Ash: preliminary work

IMD 2004 provided robust evidence on which to deploy LPT resources to initiate community work in the Ash area. On previous measures and anecdotally the area was known to have some specific needs and some previous attempts had been made to initiate specific work there, e.g. relating to the voluntary sector and community safety. SCC (LPT) worked with the main partner for social inclusion, the Healthy Living Programme (bringing their learning and expertise from community development work in North Guildford), to carry out an audit of agencies and services in the Ash area (2006). 102 questionnaires were sent out, 47 were returned, detailing 113 services. Results highlighted some clear gaps in provision of adult literacy and numeracy, youth services, and infrastructure support for the voluntary sector. Results underwent a verification (November 2006) by a meeting of local workers and representatives and wider community cohesion issues were also identified. The process has helped identify (about 20) key agencies that might form a robust network of delivery agents in the area, and networking-building meetings are planned to identify other partners' priorities, share information and strengthen the network. It is felt that an inclusive community consultation event with residents, e.g. "Planning for Real", could underpin future activity in Ash and indicate where targeted community development work might facilitate a response to some of the emerging needs. To date, however, no additional funding has been identified.