



SELF-RELIANCE IN WAVERLEY

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)
13 OCTOBER 2006**

KEY ISSUE:

The County Council has a policy to promote individual and community self-reliance and Local Committees have a role in identifying communities with particular needs and ensuring that services give appropriate attention to meeting these. This report provides the Committee with an update on recent progress in Waverley.

SUMMARY:

The report describes progress in the established multi-agency projects at Sandy Hill, Farnham and Ockford Ridge/Aaron's Hill, Godalming, along with details of some initial activity at The Chantrys, Farnham. Engagement with residents is a significant theme and the sustainability of the projects in relation to recent and possible changes in the relevant policy framework is discussed.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee (Waverley) should:

- (i) Note the recent progress made in promoting self-reliance/social inclusion in Waverley and its relevance to the neighbourhood agenda.
- (ii) Support the continued contribution of County Council services to promoting self-reliance in Waverley.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Local Committee (Waverley) agenda for 16 July 2006 (Agenda Item No. 8)

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1. The County Council's policy to promote individual and community self-reliance operates 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 which will break the cycle of dependency
 - Working in partnership with other statutory organisations, the business community and the voluntary sector
2. The Local Committee has received a series of reports, most recently on 16 July 2004, on the progress made in the two well-established multi-agency projects in the borough: those at Sandy Hill (Farnham) and Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill (Godalming). Activity in Waverley has been targeted and supported by the evidence of an increasingly comprehensive body of data (most recently the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation) and, following its consideration of the topic in 2004, the Committee agreed that exploratory work should be carried out by the Community Support Team (now Local Partnerships Team) into the possibility of initiating some additional interventions in two further priority communities: The Chantrys (Farnham) and Binscombe (Godalming).
3. There has been considerable progress in the two long-running projects in Waverley which has been made possible by increasingly well-embedded and productive working with all relevant partner organisations. This has been founded on consultation and engagement with residents around three broad themes:
 - Quality of life, including community safety and environmental improvements
 - Lifelong learning and the enhancement of employment opportunities
 - Nurturing the confidence of the community and the capacity of residents to have an influence over the shape and development of their neighbourhood

POLICY FRAMEWORK

4. Although the identified communities in Waverley are significantly less advantaged than is the norm for the borough they have nevertheless rarely qualified for any large-scale funding from the County Council or elsewhere. It has therefore been necessary to make progress through a combination of relatively modest partnership funding packages and creative mainstreaming. The needs of the most vulnerable communities have been enshrined in the objectives of the relevant borough-level partnerships, e.g. the Safer Waverley Partnership, the Community Learning Partnership and

the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP's Health and Social Inclusion Group has become the focus for targeting and co-ordinating the contribution of partner agencies to neighbourhood projects and providing for their sustainability. The projects at Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill and The Chantrys in particular have benefited to a large extent from the endorsement of the LSP.

5. A number of developments at county level, responding to the priorities of national government, are, however, transforming the policy landscape in which self-reliance/social inclusion operates. The initiation of the Local Area Agreement for Surrey in 2005 and the early development of a structure to encompass community safety within the "Safer and Stronger Communities" strand will have a considerable, although as yet unquantified, impact on delivery of this agenda at district level. Reducing the fear of crime, addressing anti-social behaviour and criminal activity and carrying out environmental improvements are major priorities for residents – not least in relatively disadvantaged neighbourhoods where consultations tend to reveal these as the most pressing concerns. However, the "stronger communities" theme is equally important as longer term preventative activity in terms of support, lifelong learning and increasing confidence is, as evidenced by the Waverley projects, the necessary background for breaking the cycle of disadvantaged and addressing the needs of those vulnerable families with multiple problems who may be concentrated in these areas.
6. More recently there has been a developing focus from central government on neighbourhoods and communities and the County Council has initiated some research into its impact at this level. The neighbourhood-based self-reliance activity undertaken in Waverley, as elsewhere in Surrey, is of significant relevance to this agenda. The features of this model have been:
 - Initial broadly based consultation
 - Collaboration between statutory agencies and residents in defining local priorities
 - Appropriate support from statutory agencies working in partnership
 - Ongoing engagement with residents in specifying the shape of local services
 - Residents increasingly taking the lead in promoting involvement and fund-raising

and are capable of forming a precedent for application elsewhere.

7. The support of elected members of all authorities has been crucial in taking forward the projects in Waverley, both in terms of their actions in committee and individually in championing the needs of the communities. Again, this provides a model for the changing role of elected members as community leaders envisaged in recent proposals.

PROGRESS AT SANDY HILL

8. The range of projects reported in the previous report are well-embedded and continue to contribute to improved quality of life in the neighbourhood. A major project, which is likely to be initiated in the near future, is the extension of The Bungalow (the community resource and activity centre provided by the County Council) to accommodate an increasing demand and need for facilities in the neighbourhood. Funding for this is being accumulated on a partnership basis and it is intended that the extended facility will also incorporate elements of the proposed Children's Centre at Hale School.
9. The Family Worker post – funded jointly by a local charitable trust, the Children's Fund and the County Council – has had a major impact in supporting those families who have multiple and complex difficulties to improve their circumstances and the progress of their children. However, the post is vulnerable from the end of the current financial year and its sustainability is seen as a major priority by all partners.
10. The estate contains well over 300 young people in the 5-19 age group and work with young people is undertaken through a number of projects, including detached work undertaken by the Youth Development Service and work with younger children co-ordinated by the Neighbourhood Warden. The Active Communities project hosted by Waverley Borough Council, to which the County Council has contributed, operates on the estate focusing initially on promoting exercise and sporting activity amongst young people. A mechanism has now been established to bring all those involved with young people together to improve co-ordination and the development of shared objectives.
11. The Bungalow hosts a large number of lifelong learning activities, particularly relating to computer literacy and basic skills and many residents have achieved qualifications which have improved their employment prospects and confidence. However, the future funding of this initiative is also uncertain in the light of the forthcoming changes to the provision of adult and community learning.
12. The project has now been active since 1997 and a restatement of its objectives is planned for the autumn/winter of 2006/2007. It is hoped to develop a model for further neighbourhood management through a community trust with representation of residents and local stakeholders.

PROGRESS AT OCKFORD RIDGE/AARONS HILL

13. Since the last report the LSP has secured the appointment, for three years until December 2007) of a Community Development Worker, jointly funded by the County and Borough Councils, to promote social inclusion, focusing initially and primarily on the Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill area. The worker has made a major contribution to the progress of this project through consulting with residents, co-ordinating funding applications, and working with the youth club. Above all, however, she has worked with the St Mark's Active Residents Team (SMART) to develop the capacity of this group to the extent that two members are now operating in a part-time community development role, identifying needs and making contact with the most isolated and vulnerable residents.
14. SMART has also been successful in securing funding for a new play area at Aarons Hill and, more recently, a similar facility and Multi-Use Games Area for Ockford Ridge, to be constructed in the next few months. In August 2006 the group hosted a visit to the neighbourhood by the Director of the Government Office for the South East and the Chief Executive of the County Council, along with two Strategic Directors. SMART members emphasised the importance of a neighbourhood focus in identifying needs and of sustained support from the statutory agencies to underpin residents' increasing confidence in taking forward initiatives themselves. It is understood that the visitors were impressed by the breadth and reach of the activity in this community and indicated that they would investigate ways in which longer term support for work of this kind could be provided.
15. These projects have contributed to a measurably improved perception of quality of life. In a survey undertaken in 2005, 97% of residents surveyed (sample of 80) were aware of improvements in the area over the two preceding years. Additional projects initiated in recent months have included Active Communities (see 10 above) and "Keeping Memories Alive", a community oral history project.

THE CHANTRY'S

16. Following the Local Committee's decision in July 2004 a student was commissioned by the Local Partnerships Team, via the Surrey Community Development Unit and in consultation with partners, to undertake an initial needs analysis of this neighbourhood. The report was presented to the LSP which agreed that a "Planning for Real" event should be organised to engage residents and to understand their concerns and priorities. A working group was set up through the LSP's Health and Social Inclusion Group to plan this, liaising with residents through The Chantrys Forum and the consultation event, funded by contributions from a number of partner organisations, took place on 16 September 2006. The next step will be the preparation of a report and the development, with residents, of an action plan later in the autumn.

BINSCOMBE

17. It has not so far proved possible to initiate any activity in Binscombe, although the LSP's Health and Social Inclusion Group keeps opportunities under review. However, Binscombe is included in one of the priority areas for Children's Centres and Loseley Fields school has been identified as the location for this.

CONCLUSION

18. Members are asked to note the recent progress made in promoting self-reliance/social inclusion in Waverley. Particular features are:
 - engagement with residents
 - extensive and productive partnership working
 - mainstreaming and maximising modest resources

The Committee is invited to endorse this approach as an effective model for neighbourhood working and for raising the capacity of residents to have a say in the management of their communities. Members may wish to note those projects which are vulnerable and to continue to promote with County Council services the need to respond flexibly to the needs of relatively disadvantaged communities.