



ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING WAVERLEY

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

KEY ISSUE:

To decide what action to take following the workshop staged by the Committee on 8 September 2006.

SUMMARY:

The Local Committee staged an informal public workshop on 8 September 2006 to increase awareness of and debate a response to a range of environmental challenges facing Waverley. Three formal presentations were given, followed by an opportunity for participants to consider priorities and possible actions. The report describes the range of topics discussed and suggests possible actions which the Committee may wish to take in response.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee (Waverley) should decide which of the actions set out in the report it wishes to take in response to the matters discussed at the workshop.

LEAD OFFICER: Dave Johnson (Area Director)

CONTACT OFFICER: David North (Local Committee and Partnership Officer)

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01483 517530

E-MAIL: d.north@surreycc.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. As part of the ongoing programme of public workshops on cross-cutting topics set out in its Business Plan 2005-2007 the Local Committee held a multi-agency event on 8 September 2006 to examine the range and extent of the environmental challenges facing Waverley and their impact on its sustainability. The focus of the meeting was on the over-arching threats to the environment, e.g climate, pollution and the use of resources, on the policy framework in which solutions may be found and on achievable actions which the Committee might take in response both on its own account and in partnership.
2. The workshop began with three scene-setting presentations:
 - Sustainability from a Planning Policy Perspective (Peter Hartley: Waverley Borough Council)
 - Air Quality (John Pitt: Surrey County Council)
 - Raising awareness of sustainability in communities (Rod Sterne: WWF)

The contents of the first two presentations are available on the Local Committee web-page at:

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/legcom/CouncilP.nsf/f5fb086c73d64f3000256954004aed25/b1cab49283f9133a802571db0045172e?OpenDocument>

The third presentation referred to opportunities for building sustainability into community initiatives, e.g. parish plans and introduced the concept of “ecological footprint” as a tool for raising awareness. This is described as:

“ . . . one way of measuring how our lifestyles impact not only on the planet, but also on other people. It calculates how much productive land and sea is needed to feed us and provide all the energy, water and materials we use in our everyday lives. It also calculates the emissions generated from the oil, coal and gas we burn at ever-increasing rates, and it determines how much land is required to absorb our waste. Measuring and reducing our ecological footprint is one of WWF's aims.”

Further information is available at:

<http://www.wwf.org.uk/researcher/issues/footprint/index.asp>

DISCUSSION

3. Participants were asked in groups to prioritise the three most important environmental challenges facing Waverley and identify actions which the Local Committee could take which would contribute towards addressing these. Summaries of the points raised in discussion are available on the Local Committee web-page (URL given above).

4. The following priorities were identified in the plenary session:
 - Maximise availability and application of data
 - Provide better information about waste
 - Promote healthchecks/parish plans and the inclusion of sustainability in these
 - Councils to show leadership by encouraging reduction in mileage
 - Accept and feel part of the solution – encourage people to measure ecological footprint
 - Promote production and use of local energy and food

ACTION BY LOCAL COMMITTEE

5. The Committee might feel that it can adopt a local leadership role by:
 - encouraging organisations and residents to be aware of the impact of their lifestyles on the local and global environment and to measure their “ecological footprint”.
 - asking the Chairman to write to relevant Town and Parish Councils with a recommendation that sustainability should be incorporated into Healthchecks and Parish Plans, possibly referring to work being undertaken by WWF elsewhere in Surrey.
6. In terms of its own priorities and processes it is suggested that the Local Committee should request that the environmental implications of reports should be more clearly stated and that air quality implications – particularly in connection with the three Air Quality Management Areas in Waverley – should be included.
7. The workshop raised some concerns about higher level policy implications, particularly with respect to the sustainable and local procurement of food, energy and materials. The Committee might wish to make representations within the County Council, both through a letter to the Executive and through officer channels, to promote the potential role of the Council as an exemplar of good practice in this regard.
8. With its partners in Waverley the Committee might also wish to ensure that small-scale domestic and business initiatives to live and operate more sustainably are encouraged.

EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP

9. The meeting was attended by approximately 20 participants, including members of the public and representatives of partner organisations. An evaluation form was issued and 80% of respondents reported that they had found the event useful and informative and a number were very positive about the impact of the event. The workshop discussions were seen as a particular strength and the venue, timing and format were rated positively.