



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)

PROMOTING STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN WAVERLEY

14 DECEMBER 2007

KEY ISSUE

To update the Committee on recent developments in Waverley and to outline policy options for the future.

SUMMARY

The report describes the context, drivers and rationale for promoting stronger communities, along with relevant policies and approaches. It updates the Committee on progress, within the existing self reliance policy, in four priority areas in Waverley and provides an opportunity to influence the promotion of a sustainable approach to the creation of stronger communities both countywide and locally.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to agree to:

- (i) Note the progress update on priority community projects in Waverley.
- (ii) Continue to use resources at its disposal to promote the development of stronger, more self-reliant communities in Waverley.
- (iii) Use its influence to promote a strategic approach to the creation of stronger communities by embedding relevant commitments in the objectives of the County Council, the Local Area Agreement and the new Sustainable Community Strategy for Waverley.

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 Waverley, 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 Waverley 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 Waverley 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 The Surrey Strategic Partnership recognised the impact of such tensions and the need to address them in promoting the sustainable and cohesive county envisaged in its **Surrey in 2020** vision. This evidence-based vision was compiled using a tested and validated “scenario planning” approach. It analysed strategic challenges for the county, promoting a common sense of direction through a number of themes. Examples of what could and should happen are as follows:

Economic Development in Surrey

There will be a better spread of household incomes in the county. Trade skills will be highly valued and young people will be better prepared for life and work. . . . For Surrey, the difficulties in attracting and retaining key workers are significant. Lower paid staff cannot afford to live in Surrey.

Changing lifestyles in Surrey

There will be an increasing focus on local early intervention to help ensure success at school and inclusion of young people in their community. There will be a greater focus on healthy and sustainable lifestyles so that related illnesses will have declined and communities’ impacts on the environment will have decreased.

Communities, culture and identity of Surrey

The county will be known for its ability to accommodate and value diverse communities . . . There will be a greater focus on communities working together to help themselves and provide support to vulnerable and at risk groups.

- 1.4 Similarly, 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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 (evidenced later in this report) 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.
- 1.7 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”.

2 UPDATE AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Within Waverley there is a long and productive tradition of multi-agency activity in this field in which the County Council has, at both member- and officer-level (through the Local Partnerships Team), played a full (and often a leading) role. The Committee has received regular reports on progress (most recently on 13 October 2006) and has been active in its use of local allocations in priority areas and in encouraging County Council services to respond creatively to local needs. The Waverley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has also prioritised the promotion of stronger communities and the reduction in health inequalities and has provided an umbrella for joint working across the borough.

2.2 The standard tool for identifying disadvantage in neighbourhoods is the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England (IMD: 2004). When combined with relevant data from the 2001 census, four communities in Waverley have been identified for particular support (and endorsed by the Local Committee on 16 July 2004):

- Sandy Hill (Farnham)
- Ockford Ridge/Aaron’s Hill (Godalming)
- The Chantrys (Farnham)
- Binscombe (Godalming)

(The IMD is due to be updated in the near future and, when local analysis has been undertaken, a report on its findings will be brought to the Local Committee).

2.3 In view of the regular reports on progress made to this Committee, the following update will concentrate on a selection of very recent developments.

2.4 Sandy Hill

- Completion of Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) as a focus for young people’s sporting activities
- Initiation of “Wreck-to-Ride” project by Youth Development Service – rebuilding bicycles for use by participating young people, with the support of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, a local business and the Safer Waverley Partnership.

- The Family Worker continues to work with all local partners, focused on The Bungalow which the County Council provides as an in-kind contribution to the project as a whole, to support, encourage and integrate within the community those children and families who are experiencing difficulties.
- In conjunction with Farnham Town Council the Local Highways Service is installing a 20mph speed limit and associated traffic calming on Sandy Hill Road.
- The detached Youth Worker has engaged successfully with young people so that there are no young people in Sandy Hill who are not in Employment, Education or Training. Equally, she has addressed cultural and equalities issues by organising exchange activities with projects in the Gambia.

2.5 Ockford Ridge/Aaron's Hill

- This community has over the past year had to contend with the aftermath of St Mark's School's having been put in "special measures" following its OfSTED report in late 2006, including the subsequent uncertainty about the future of the school. However, clear advocacy by local residents, the County Councillor and others has stressed the importance of the school being retained and supported to turn around. The Executive has now agreed a way forward and has recognised the significant role played by this school in the sustainability and well-being of the community.
- The progress and conduct of this project has illustrated the effectiveness of investment in community development to support residents in sharing responsibility for their neighbourhoods with statutory partners. The LSP's community development worker (jointly funded by the County and Borough Councils until the spring of 2008) has worked with the St Mark's Active Residents Team (SMART) to fund and install a MUGA and enhanced play equipment. SMART also provides a route through which residents can gain the confidence to enter employment and an associated initiative is "SMART Helpers", through which residents volunteer to offer appropriate support to vulnerable residents in the neighbourhood.
- Traffic-calming has been installed to improve road safety adjacent to St Mark's School.

2.6 The Chantrys

- Following the Planning for Real consultation event in September 2006 the LSP's community development worker has continued to work informally with residents and to consult on local needs and concerns.
- The Local Highways Service responded rapidly to residents' principal concerns, which were about road safety, and improved the provision of "give-way" markings. More recently, local children have taken part in a competition to design road signs to encourage drivers to slow

down and these are currently being prepared for production by the County Council's Community Travel Team.

2.7 Binscombe

- Due to restricted capacity during 2006/07 progress in this area has been limited. The LSP's community development worker has provided some support to a residents' group in Northbourne and the recently opened Children's Centre at Loseley Fields School is providing a venue for a voluntary sector youth facility.
- The Safer Waverley Partnership has responded to recent community safety problems by deploying the Surrey Together Team in Farncombe to work particularly with young people.
- Qualitative evidence from other projects in Waverley suggests that multi-agency activity with some additional investment is necessary to strengthen neighbourhoods and it is hoped that the current refresh of the LSP's Sustainable Community Strategy will provide a vehicle for partners to respond to the evidence that this is an area in need of considerable support and investment.

2.8 It is encouraging that an awareness of the demographic profile of Waverley and of the needs of particular neighbourhoods is becoming more widely embedded in services. For example, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has recently undertaken some concentrated activity in the High Lane area of Haslemere to offer Home Fire Risk Assessments to residents and envisages extending this approach to further neighbourhoods.

3 **OUTCOMES, SUCCESSES & ISSUES**

3.1 It is recognised that it can be difficult to measure the outcomes of community development work and, even having done so, it cannot be entirely clear whether improvements have occurred as a direct result of interventions undertaken.

3.2 It is, however, increasingly important to demonstrate genuine improvements and the Local Partnerships Team for Waverley is developing a menu of measures, based partly on residents' views and partly on service outputs and focusing on generic changes in perception and changes associated with specific interventions. The approach is being piloted at **Sandy Hill** and the following data illustrates the work done to date:

- In the year 2006-2007 attendance at the County Council-run Detached Youth Project increased by approximately 20% (a total of 150 young people have been in contact during the year); membership of two groups for younger children co-ordinated by the Neighbourhood Warden has increased by over 100% to 47 and the groups are now running at maximum capacity. The community's rating of youth provision on the estate now stands at 100%, an

increase of 39% over the 2005 score; there are currently no members of the Detached Youth Project who are not in education, employment or training.

- The Bungalow is currently receiving on average well over 100 personal visits per week and awareness of the facility locally has increased by 13% since 2005 to 90%.
- The “Switch on to IT” project (offered via the computer suite at The Bungalow) has to date reached 158 learners (25% above target), with a consequent improvement of basic skills and employability: 125 have achieved qualifications and 65 have progressed to employment or further education; residents’ rating of the ICT facilities on site stand at 93% (an increase of 35% over the 2005 score)
- The Family Worker can cite detailed case-studies of her work in which she has used all of the opportunities available to liaise locally with agencies to support vulnerable families in the community (e.g. by encouraging their attendance at the projects referred to above). She is currently supporting over 20 families with 60 children in total.
- There has been an encouraging reduction in crime levels, but improved access to officers and rising expectations may be responsible for a slight increase in reported incidents and a small decrease in satisfaction with environmental conditions (e.g. litter and parking problems).

3.3 This recent development of specifying outcome measures, started in Sandy Hill, is now being rolled out to the other projects in Waverley and across the county. It is anticipated that the outcome measures will be adopted within a new Stronger Communities Strategy for Surrey currently being drafted, see 4.2, below.

3.4 An issue which is recognised, as stated in 3.1, is that success should not always be measured quantitatively; some outcomes are best judged qualitatively. So softer data in the form of case studies and residents’ perceptions, is just as important. Consistent evidence from America (and cited by Iain Duncan Smith in the **Breakthrough Britain** report) shows that, in such communities, for every dollar invested in the first three years of a child’s life up to seventeen dollars are saved by the state later.

3.5 And, it should be added, the life chances for that child are considerably enhanced, with the likelihood of improvements for the wider community also apparent, see 6.3, below.

4 OPTIONS

4.1 The Committee has in the past supported the continuation of the four named neighbourhood projects in Waverley as part of its contribution to the delivery of the County Council’s self-reliance policy. In promoting mainstream activity as a means of achieving this, it has requested that services presenting reports should show what they have done to support the self-reliance policy.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Locally, the Committee may wish to indicate its support for the inclusion of specific actions to strengthen priority communities in the forthcoming updated Sustainable Community Strategy for Waverley. It is particularly emphasised that all of this work is planned and delivered across key partner agencies, such as borough and district councils, the Police, the PCT, the voluntary sector and faith groups.
- 4.6 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.

5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 All of the projects in Waverley are based on the principle that residents need to be engaged and involved in setting and delivering on a local agenda. Three detailed "Planning for Real" exercises have been carried out and ongoing liaison with representative residents continues to take place. Elected members are also involved in discussions and in supporting projects.

6 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The County Council's investment in the creation of stronger communities has principally, on a countywide basis, been through its self-reliance budget: six large-scale projects (none in Waverley) have each been funded to the tune of £50,000 p.a. over three years.

Smaller sums of money have been available from this budget for other areas and the Waverley projects have been allocated modest, one-off, grants from this source.

- 6.2 The Waverley projects have also received grants from members' Local Committee allocations and via the various budgets held by the Safer Waverley Partnership. Considerable progress has been made through multi-agency funding packages and responding creatively to opportunities for re-aligning mainstream services in a locally-sensitive fashion.
- 6.3 The "value for money" implications of early intervention and prevention are difficult to assess. One of the founding principles of the self-reliance policy adopted by the County Council was that investment of this kind would be repaid in the future through reduced demands on expensive acute responses to crises and problems which had been allowed to intensify. Investment in generic support to vulnerable communities has been shown to be associated with greater confidence, skills and empowerment in disadvantaged communities (see above) and to contribute significantly to the "stronger communities" agenda in its broadest sense.
- 6.4 Members are encouraged to continue use of their local allocations to support aspects of the local projects. However, a sustainable programme of investment countywide – allied with a requirement for services to develop a more locally-sensitive and preventative approach to delivery – would support the infrastructure of premises and community development which have been shown to underpin the strengthening of vulnerable communities.

7 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The promotion of strong, cohesive and sustainable community life is based on an approach which supports vulnerable and less advantaged residents so that they can take opportunities for accessing employment and the benefits of living in Surrey. The approach also has regard to the particular needs of particular groups, e.g. ethnic minorities, older people and disabled residents.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Responding to community safety concerns tends to be a priority for residents and contributes to the promotion of stronger, more resilient communities, which in turn have increased confidence in resisting crime and anti-social behaviour.

9 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The report outlines recent progress and describes opportunities for using this experience to influence the development of more strategic approaches to the promotion of safer and stronger communities.

9.2 The Committee is therefore invited to:

- Use the resources at its disposal to promote the development of stronger, more self-reliant communities in Waverley.
- Use its influence to promote a strategic approach to the creation of stronger communities by embedding relevant commitments in the objectives of the County Council, the Local Area Agreement and the Sustainable Community Strategy for Waverley.

10 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Committee is invited to note the reasons for promoting stronger, more inclusive and more self-reliant communities. In consequence it is asked to make a commitment to sustain the projects under way in Waverley, both in terms of resources and the activities of services, to use its influence to promote this locally and to endorse the adoption of a countywide strategic approach to the creation of stronger communities.

11 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

11.1 The Local Partnerships Team will convey the Committee's views into the relevant local and countywide processes involved with the development of new strategies and objectives.

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