



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

PROGRESS IN PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

17 DECEMBER 2010

KEY ISSUE

The Local Committee receives regular reports on activities in those communities in Waverley where it has agreed to give particular support.

SUMMARY

The report provides an update on work in the established projects and describes new initiatives established during the year. There is a stress on progress made in sustaining projects through collaboration with voluntary organisations.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to agree:

- (i) To note and endorse the progress made in the priority communities in Waverley.
- (ii) To continue to use the resources at its disposal to promote the development of stronger, more self-reliant communities in Waverley, especially those which it has identified as priorities.
- (iii) To use its influence where appropriate to advocate the needs of disadvantaged communities in Waverley.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Committee has received regular reports on work undertaken in Waverley to improve quality of life and opportunities in those communities which experience the greatest disadvantage. The contribution and investment of County Council services remain significant, but – as the Committee has

noted in the past – work of this kind has typically been carried out in partnership (both with other agencies and with residents) and steady progress continues to be made.

- 1.2 In recent months the context for this work has shifted towards that of the “Big Society” agenda. The progress made, as reported to the Committee in December 2009, in increasingly involving residents and the voluntary sector as a means of sustaining the local projects is particularly relevant in this respect. While the full implications of the Big Society concept remain to be fully worked through, the core principles developed by the Big Society Network are helpful in summarising the approach:

- **Empowering individuals and communities:** decentralising and redistributing power not just from Whitehall to local government, but also directly to communities, neighbourhoods and individuals
- **Encouraging social responsibility:** encouraging organisations and individuals to get involved in social action
- **Creating an enabling and accountable state:** transforming government action from top-down micromanagement and one-size-fits-all solutions to a flexible approach defined by transparency, payment by results and support for social enterprise and cooperatives

More information may be found at: <http://thebigsociety.co.uk/> .

- 1.3 The Surrey Strategic Partnership has identified a small number of “priority places” in Surrey in which it aims to focus significant joint action to achieve the regeneration of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. None of these areas fall within Waverley. However, the Leader of the County Council subsequently announced the launch of a Small Disadvantaged Areas Fund for innovative projects throughout the county; at its meeting on 17 September 2010 the Local Committee endorsed the submission of four applications from projects in Waverley and it is envisaged that, following the decision of the countywide panel on 7 December 2010, the outcome of these will be reported at this meeting.

2 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

- 2.1 The Local Committee has agreed that four communities in Waverley should be identified for particular support

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

Evidence of the needs of these neighbourhoods is provided by small area data such as that contained in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007.

The first three of these areas have been the focus of sustained and coherent multi-agency activity for a number of years, as reported in previous reports. Work in Binscombe has been more recent but has grown in pace and coherence in the past year and is the focus of a substantial application to the Small Disadvantaged Areas Fund (1.3 above).

- 2.2 One of the purposes of this annual report is to update the Committee on the data available to measure and monitor conditions at a local level in Waverley. The most recent relevant data-set to be made available is the Child Wellbeing Index (Department of Communities and Local Government 2009) which, like IMD, publishes data at sub-ward level through a network of “Super Output Areas” (SOA). Within Waverley only two SOAs are contained in the most disadvantaged 50 in Surrey: one in Farnham Upper Hale (002E which covers most of Sandy Hill at 6th) and one in Binscombe (005C which includes Northbourne and the adjacent areas at 36th). The data is presented at **Annex 1**. This provides further evidence of the needs of these areas and for a continued focus on preventative work at Sandy Hill.
- 2.3 The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local authorities and their partners to work together to tackle child poverty and its effects locally. The strategic approach within Surrey will be governed through the Surrey Alliance for Children and Young People, but it is anticipated that many of the needs and issues will be more appropriately addressed through local planning and implementation. There will consequently be an opportunity to link some of the work under way in Waverley – much of which has targeted children and young people and their families within a community context – with this emerging agenda. The growing range of Children’s Centre activity in Waverley over the past year has added an additional dimension to the resources, capacity and reach available to support the most vulnerable families in the borough.
- 2.4 The continuing effects of the recession may have a two-fold impact on the priority communities: challenges to public sector funding may result in a reduced level of support to projects while residents may face reduced employment opportunities and changes to the benefits system. As an indicator of increasing need, the Council’s School Census has revealed that Free School Meal eligibility increased by 18.5% in the county in the two years from January 2008 to January 2010. It remains, therefore, a priority both to seek to sustain projects via the voluntary, faith and community sector, building on the existing foundations to further expand residents’ skills and confidence, and to ensure that mainstream services are appropriately adjusted and targeted to respond to local needs. All the projects described benefit from the support of a dedicated community worker who is able to maximise funding opportunities, mentor community volunteers and coordinate activities, especially in the early stages.
- 2.5 In addition to the four priority communities referred to above (2.1), work has started additionally this year in two further neighbourhoods. The Roman Way estate in Farnham is contained within an SOA which ranks ninth overall in Waverley in the IMD 2007 and opportunities have presented themselves to partners to initiate some joint activities here: Waverley Borough Council is leading on the development of a Neighbourhood Agreement (building on the successful precedent established in The Chantrys) and Surrey Police, the County Council and the Safer Waverley partnership are contributing towards some road safety improvements and a project for young people. Lifelong Learning sessions are also being offered via the Opportunities project.
- 2.6 The area of south Farnham in the vicinity of Weydon School, comprising three SOAs at the apex of each of the wards of Wrecclesham & Rowledge, Shortheath & Boundstone and Firgrove, is recognised as an area of moderate disadvantage (ranking at respectively 16, 8 and 18 within Waverley). Building

on an initial consultation and assessment undertaken some years ago by the Farnham Christian Community Trust, a number of groups have contributed to the launch of a Wrecclesham Community Project, based at the Community Centre. Supported by, among others, Local Committee grants, Weydon School and the Children's Centres at Potter's Gate and Elstead, lifelong learning opportunities and activities for young people are on offer. In addition a joint project supported by Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council is beginning to engage residents via community clean-up days.

3. INVOLVING RESIDENTS AND SUSTAINING PROJECTS

- 3.1 In working in the priority communities in Waverley, partners have always sought to consult openly with residents and involve them in delivering interventions and improvements. In the three established projects (Sandy Hill, Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill, The Chantry) this has been initiated through a Planning for Real exercise and sustained by ongoing contact between locally focused staff and residents' groups and representatives, e.g at The Chantry Forum. More recently the model of staging community clean-up days has proved successful in engaging residents in Binscombe and Wrecclesham.
- 3.2 The intention of the former self-reliance and associated approaches has been to ensure that locally sensitive projects and interventions become embedded in mainstream service delivery. Examples of this are the continuing investment of the Highways service in the successful joint caretaking project at Sandy Hill and the encouraging approach being taken through the Neighbourhood Agreement at The Chantry.
- 3.3 The Committee was informed in December 2009 of the establishment of a Community Trust to take over the lease and management of the Bungalow at Sandy Hill. The Board of Trustees consists of an equal number of representatives drawn from, on the one hand, residents of the estate and, on the other, the statutory partners involved in the project. The rebuilt Bungalow was formally opened in May 2010 and is offering an extended range of services and facilities to residents of Sandy Hill and the surrounding area, some in conjunction with the adjacent Children's Centre whose extended premises were themselves opened in October. The innovative governance arrangements adopted at Sandy Hill have been cited by the County Council as a precedent for the transfer of assets to community organisations and the voluntary sector as a means of sustaining valued local premises – in itself a development which reflects "Big Society" principles.
- 3.4 The Committee is also aware of the development of innovative collaboration with the voluntary and faith sector to enable projects to be sustained and the partnership arrangements with the Jubilee Church at The Chantry and with St Mark's Church at Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill have continued to work with residents to offer services and facilities locally (e.g. the refurbished community centre at The Chantry). Voluntary Action South West Surrey continues to support residents when required in the formal aspects of setting up formal organisations and has been particularly active in The Chantry and instrumental in developing projects in Farncombe/Binscombe which are intended to create stronger and more cohesive communities.

- 3.5 The investment of partners in officers whose specific role is to support residents in increasing confidence, sharing solutions and seeking external funding has been pivotal in taking forward the projects outlined above. The Committee will be aware that, since 2004, the County Council jointly funded with Waverley Borough Council a Community Development Worker operating primarily at Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill, but also at The Chantry, in Binscombe and now in Wrecclesham. The post is now sustained within Waverley Borough Council but, in the current year, a number of the projects have continued to benefit from residual funding from the County Council's former self-reliance budget.
- 3.6 The role of elected members in providing appropriate support and leadership to priority communities has been significant. The Local Committee has invested in many specific projects in these neighbourhoods and the support of councillors as community leaders is highly valued and often pivotal in strengthening and shaping projects.

4. PREVENTATIVE WORK

- 4.1 Investment in interventions designed to prevent vulnerable residents (particularly young people) from needing costly acute support in the future and to open up opportunities which have not hitherto been available to residents in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods have been central to the former self-reliance policy and more recent thinking in relation to stronger communities. Empowering and engaging communities is also one of the principles of the "Big Society" concept.
- 4.2 Much of this work continues to focus on children and teenagers. The Sandy Hill Detached Youth Project has maintained its engagement with large numbers of local teenagers and is supported in its activities by all relevant partners, including the First Wessex Housing Group which has funded some improvements to the Youth Shelter used as a base for the project. Younger children have benefited from the enhanced accommodation and facilities now offered at The Bungalow. A range of organisations are involved in offering co-ordinated services for young people in the Farncombe/Binscombe area, including the "Street Team" (a faith sector organisation) which is making progress in engaging young people who congregate at various locations around the neighbourhood.
- 4.3 The implementation of the Sure Start Children's Centre programme in Waverley currently offers a significant level of guaranteed local support to all families with young children. This is particularly relevant in the priority areas, each of which is served by a Centre either in the community or adjacent to it: Hale/The Bungalow (Sandy Hill), Potter's Gate (The Chantry, Roman Way and, with Elstead, Wrecclesham), Loseley Fields (Binscombe), The Wharf at Green Oak (Ockford Ridge/Aarons Hill).

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 The Local Committee has in the past provided considerable funding to the priority areas through the budgets delegated to it and is invited to continue this commitment.

- 5.2 A number of County Council services have likewise made significant commitments towards these areas and succeeded in embedding activities in their mainstream services. The Local Partnerships Team has been active in co-ordinating and steering projects, in facilitating partnership working and in identifying sources of funding. The Committee may wish to endorse this activity and advocate its extension where possible, especially where value for money might be achieved by collaboration with partners.

6. CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 All of the projects in Waverley are based on the principle of engaging residents and involving them 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.

7 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Relevant implications have been identified throughout the report. In relation to the benefits of preventative activities, the Committee is reminded of the return achieved by investment in young people in their early years. Furthermore, investment in, for example, lifelong learning can not only widen employment opportunities but empower residents to become involved in social enterprises which are able to take on responsibilities from statutory agencies, e.g. the development of the Bungalow Community Trust.

8 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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 needs of particular groups, e.g. ethnic minorities, older people and disabled residents.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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. The Safer Waverley Partnership prioritises the neighbourhoods covered by this report as part of its preventative activities.

10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The report provides an update on work in Waverley to improve conditions and opportunities in those areas which the Committee has identified for action, and which take forward locally a number of the priorities adopted by the County Council. The County Council, other public sector agencies and, increasingly the voluntary and faith sector, are seeking to reduce inequalities and empower individuals and communities to develop local solutions to the

problems which face them. The Committee is invited to note progress and endorse the continuation of this activity, providing support and advocacy where appropriate.

11 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

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

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None