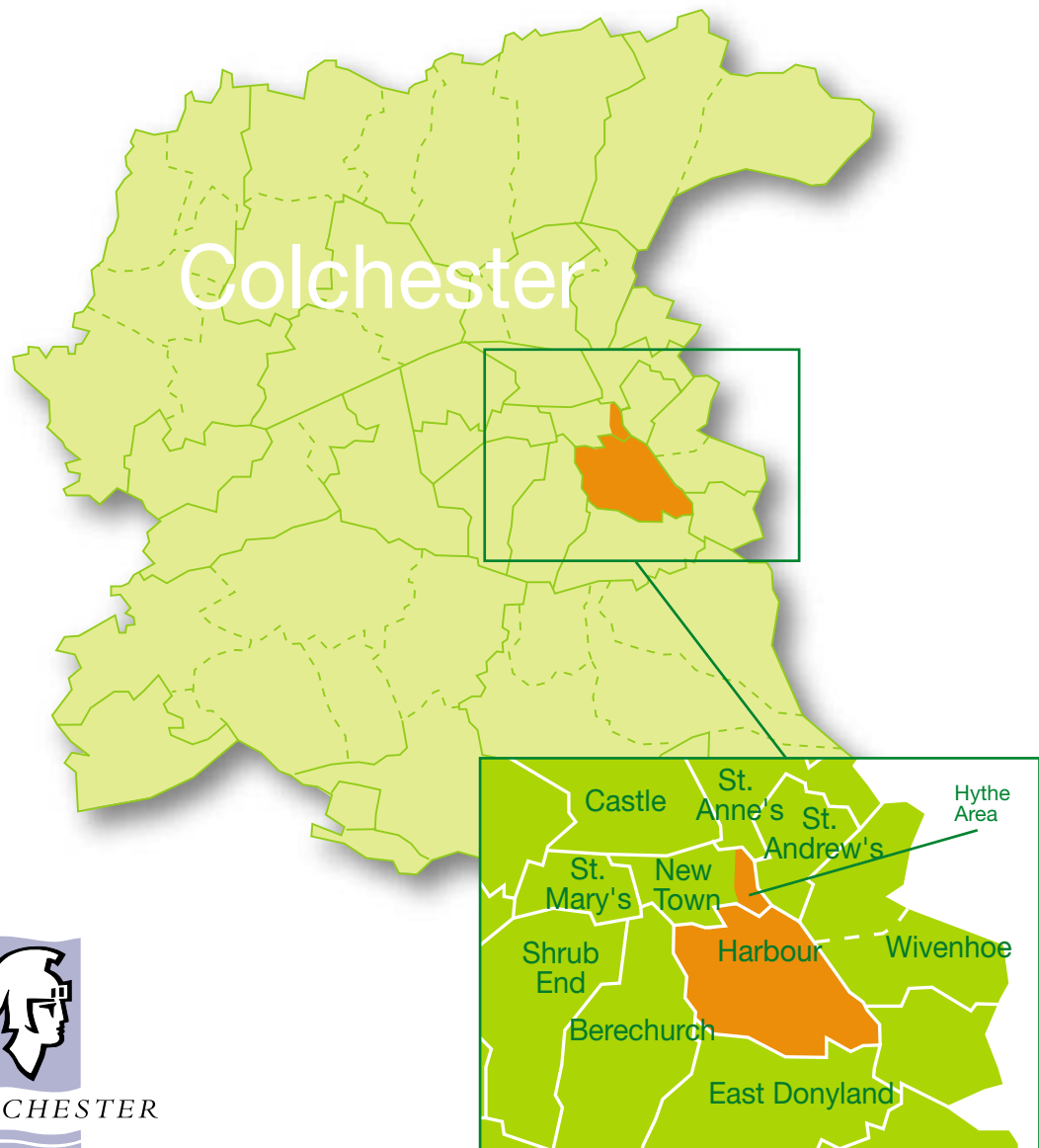


Discovering Need, Developing Solutions

Harbour Ward Community Strengths Assessment



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HARBOUR WARD COMMUNITY STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) GENERAL INFORMATION

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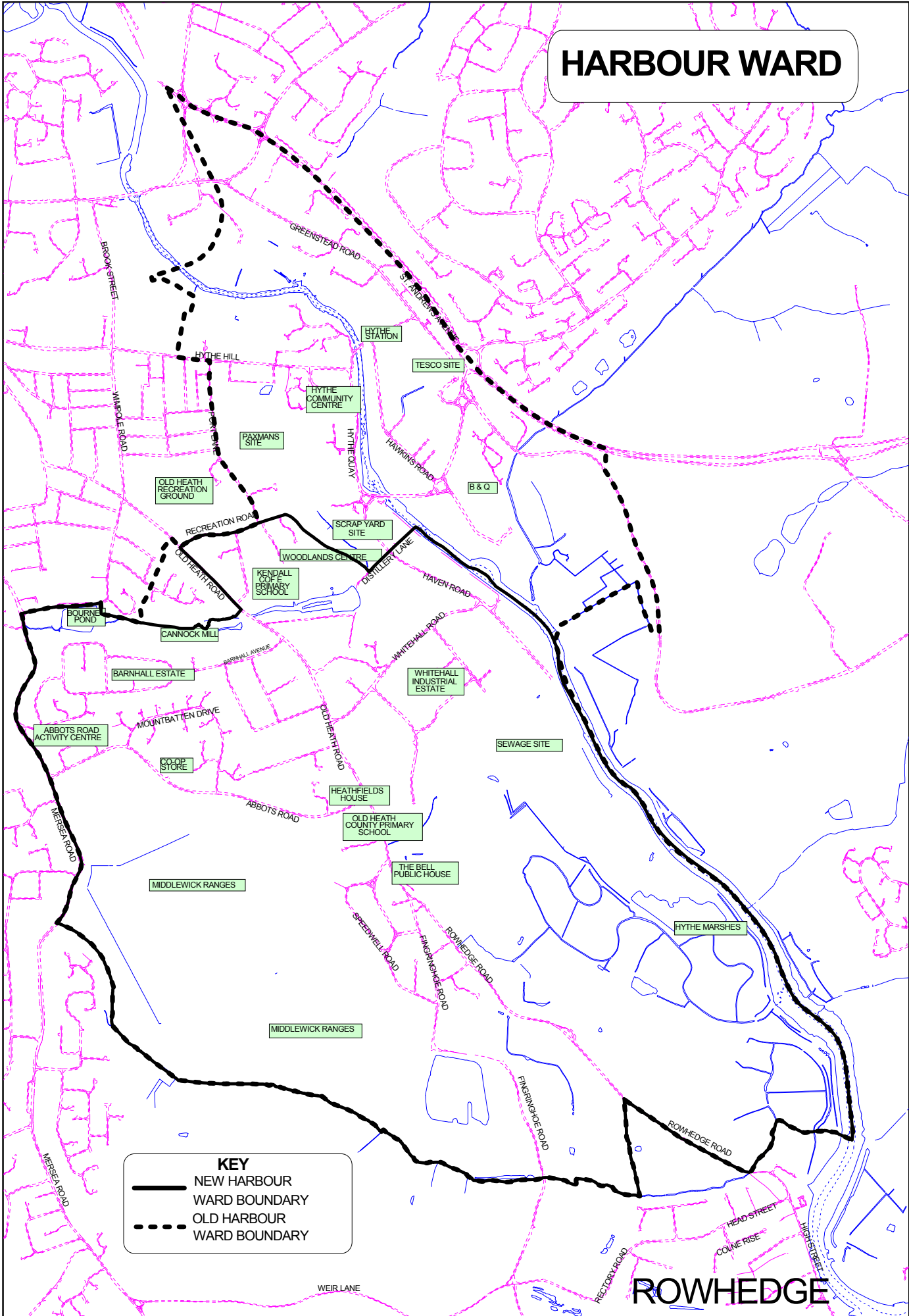
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HARBOUR WARD



KEY

- NEW HARBOUR WARD BOUNDARY
- - - OLD HARBOUR WARD BOUNDARY

ROWHEDGE

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 Focus of community investment

- 2.1.1 In Harbour there are less than half (six) the number of community and voluntary groups than there are in the Hythe (13). This in part reflects the fact that there has been more community investment in the Hythe regeneration area than in Harbour ward.
- 2.1.2 One example of this concentration of resources is that whilst three support organisations fund groups in the Hythe regeneration area, only one is funding a group in Harbour.
- 2.1.3 This gulf between the amount of funding that has gone into these two areas is also highlighted by interviews with the community and voluntary groups themselves. More than one half of the groups in Harbour (four) said that funding is a significant problem, in contrast to only two of the 13 groups in the Hythe who said that it is a significant problem.
- 2.1.4 Another example is the number of paid employees support organisations employ to work specifically within these areas. According to the organisations interviewed, there are three and a half full time paid employees that carry out some work with community and voluntary groups in the Hythe regeneration area, including a jointly funded community development worker. In contrast, there is just the equivalent of one full-time employee from these support organisations working in Harbour, but this person is also shared across a number of other areas (including the Hythe regeneration area).

2.2 Community meeting facilities

- 2.2.1 Groups in Harbour were generally much less satisfied with their arrangements for using premises than groups in the Hythe regeneration area or groups in the surrounding areas. This dissatisfaction is highlighted by the fact that of the three groups overall who said that they have no alternative but to meet in a member's home or public place, all are based in Harbour ward.
- 2.2.2 This issue of community meeting facilities has been strongly vocalised by groups in Harbour ward and by community workers looking to extend outreach into this area. Without prompting, 21% of residents also highlighted the need for a community meeting place through the household survey.
- 2.2.3 A very small proportion of residents that took part in the household survey (7%) said that they attend social clubs in area. A convincing

explanation for this is that there are very few community and voluntary groups running social clubs in Harbour. This in turn may very likely be linked to the fact that there is not a designated local community space in which social groups can meet.

2.3 Funding

- 2.3.1 Funding seems to be a general concern for groups in all areas, with 21 of the 28 groups that were interviewed indicating that it is a problem on some level.
- 2.3.2 It is interesting to note that where funding advice has been sought, groups appear to be more confident in their fundraising skills.

2.4 Transport

- 2.4.1 Of the eight resources that groups were asked about, access to transport seems to be the most problematic. A sum of nine groups rated transport as a problem.
- 2.4.2 One support organisation said that they help community and voluntary groups with the issue of transport, with a charge. Additionally, one group in Harbour and two groups in the surrounding area said that they could offer transport to groups.
- 2.4.3 This could be an indication that co-ordinating transport between groups in the area may help alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by these groups who highlighted transport problems as an issue.

2.5 Services for young people

- 2.5.1 Services and facilities for young people in Harbour ward have been identified as an area of need through the household survey. When asked about ideas for additional community groups, 23% of those that responded said that the community would benefit from more activities for teenagers and 20% suggested facilities for younger children such as a play group or play area.
- 2.5.2 General leisure and recreation facilities were also seen to be areas that could be further developed in Harbour. A total of 40% of respondents to the household survey said that leisure and recreation facilities are poor or very poor.
- 2.5.3 Research conducted at the beginning of 2003 by the Community Street Wardens supports the view that more facilities and activities need to be targeted at young people in Harbour ward. In a survey conducted with residents on Barnhall estate, 77% of people said that there are not

enough activities in the area to keep young people occupied. A meeting with teenagers established that the facilities they would like are a football field and a youth club.

2.6 Community and voluntary groups: skills and training

- 2.6.1 Interviews with the support organisations revealed that a wide range of training is available to community and voluntary groups. The support organisations interviewed said that they could provide a total of almost 50 training courses on 16 subject areas.
- 2.6.2 Resources are also available for tailor-made training courses and there is some capacity for groups to run their own training. However, very little tailor made training is given to groups by support organisations.
- 2.6.3 On the whole, groups expressed high levels of confidence that the skills of their active members meet the needs of their organisation. Nearly two thirds of groups had received training in the last year. Most groups said that they had also developed their skills through experience or action.
- 2.6.4 Groups were especially confident about their skills in team working, working in partnership and planning activities.
- 2.6.5 More than one half of all groups said they would like help identifying their training needs. This is positive because there may be skills that groups have not thought to develop, which would be extremely beneficial to their work and the strength of the organisation.
- 2.6.6 There is some evidence that the awareness of the value of training in the development of the organisation is lacking in some groups. For example, many groups felt that managing staff is not relevant to the work of their active members. However, staff and volunteer management is extremely important for building the capacity of an organisation. Many groups said that they experience problems recruiting and retaining volunteers. It is possible that the awareness of management skills in the development of the group is under-appreciated by some of the groups.
- 2.6.7 Training is available on the three areas in which a number of groups said that they have difficulties: computer skills, the media and how the Council works. The support organisations may wish to consider focussing on these areas when helping groups to identify their training needs.
- 2.6.8 The support organisations indicated that they can provide advice on funding, planning and developing the organisation and managing projects.

2.6.9 Advice is not available on team building, meeting and committee skills and using the media.

2.7 Building equality

2.7.1 Nearly one third of community and voluntary groups do not have an equal opportunities policy or statement of equality within their constitution.

2.7.2 Groups tend to have an informal approach to implementing equal opportunities, although on the whole they seem genuinely committed to fairness.

2.7.3 One third of all groups that we spoke to use buildings that are not accessible to wheelchair users. This includes half of the groups in Harbour, roughly one third of the groups in the Hythe regeneration area and the majority of groups in the surrounding area. All but one of the groups in Harbour use buildings that do not have wheelchair accessible toilets.

2.7.4 There is very minimal support available to groups in the arena of equal opportunities from the support organisations interviewed. Also lacking is the availability of training, translators/interpreters and funding for equal opportunities initiatives.

2.7.5 Many of the support organisations said that they were happy to offer informal advice and information when approached by individual groups. However, there was very little focus on the development of equal opportunities within the community and voluntary groups and very little support offered by support organisations to assist this development.

2.8 Building community involvement

2.8.1 The most common means for communicating with the community is through newsletters and regular feedback meetings. One third of groups also hold an annual election of representatives.

2.8.2 The most common methods of finding out about community needs are through survey research and outreach work.

2.9 Community networks

2.9.1 More than one half of the community and voluntary groups that we interviewed are members of formal networks. These groups represent a good cross section of those in the Hythe regeneration area, Harbour and the surrounding area.

- 2.9.2 Interestingly, support agencies felt that a strong aspect of the work that they carry out with community and voluntary groups is helping them to work jointly with statutory agencies and other groups.
- 2.9.3 Just one third of community and voluntary groups (nine) have been involved in joint working with the Council and a little over one third of groups have been involved in joint working with any other statutory agencies. In both these cases, these figures represent mostly groups from the Hythe area.
- 2.9.4 Of those support organisations that have a role in networks with community and voluntary groups, only one related their involvement specifically to Harbour ward and three to the Hythe area.
- 2.9.5 Most support organisations planned the support that they offer community and voluntary groups with at least one other organisation. This suggests that some infrastructure for joint working exists. Further networks may need to be developed in Harbour ward.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a short list of recommendations from issues that have emerged from, and during the course of, the research. These suggestions are intended as a starting point for the Harbour Action Group to begin tackling some of the issues and are by no means an exhaustive list.

3.1 Increasing support

The research has shown that, compared to the Hythe area, Harbour ward has seen less community investment over recent years. Existing community and voluntary groups may benefit from increased support, perhaps through the provision of a community development worker operating specifically in the area. Support might focus on developing the skills and capacity of existing organisations as well as increasing overall community participation.

3.2 Exploring community meeting places

The lack of places for groups to meet has been identified as a problem in Harbour ward. Potential meeting places need to be explored in Harbour itself and imaginative use of existing venues could be suggested for groups to use, e.g. meeting room in Barnhall Community Café (Mezzie Mays). Groups need to be encouraged to use existing meeting spaces as well as assisted in finding new community facilities.

3.3 Including young people

The issue that the community lacks social activities for young people has emerged through both the household survey and interviews with community groups. Residents feel that young people do not have enough to do and therefore cause a nuisance in certain areas of Harbour. More work needs to be focussed on integrating young people into the current activities going on in Harbour, as well as providing community facilities for young people in the ward.

3.4 Publicising existing support

Support (such as funding advice) that is currently available to community and voluntary groups needs to be more effectively publicised and co-ordinated to ensure groups are accessing the support that is available. Support organisations need to ensure that groups know where to go to access support such as advice and training.

3.5 Identifying training and support needs

More work could be undertaken in helping community and voluntary groups identify their training and support needs, since more than one half of all groups said they would like help with this issue. Additionally, this is important because some community and voluntary groups may not be aware of the value of training in the development of the organisation.

3.6 Developing capacity in the voluntary sector

A number of other areas were highlighted in the research as needing further work in order to develop a thriving community and voluntary sector in Harbour. The most evident were:

- Support for building equal opportunities in existing and emerging groups.
- Support in developing networks between the community and voluntary groups and networks between the groups and support organisations (e.g. Colchester Borough Council).
- Help for groups in researching needs in the community and ensuring accountability to their users (e.g. consultation, monitoring and evaluation).