

ST ANDREWS EVALUATION
COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
2007

1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

Queries / Comments

This report was produced by Sarah Hardwick and Mandy Jones in the Project and Research team at Colchester Borough Council. If you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Project and Research Team on ☎01206 282501, or email mandy.jones@colchester.gov.uk.

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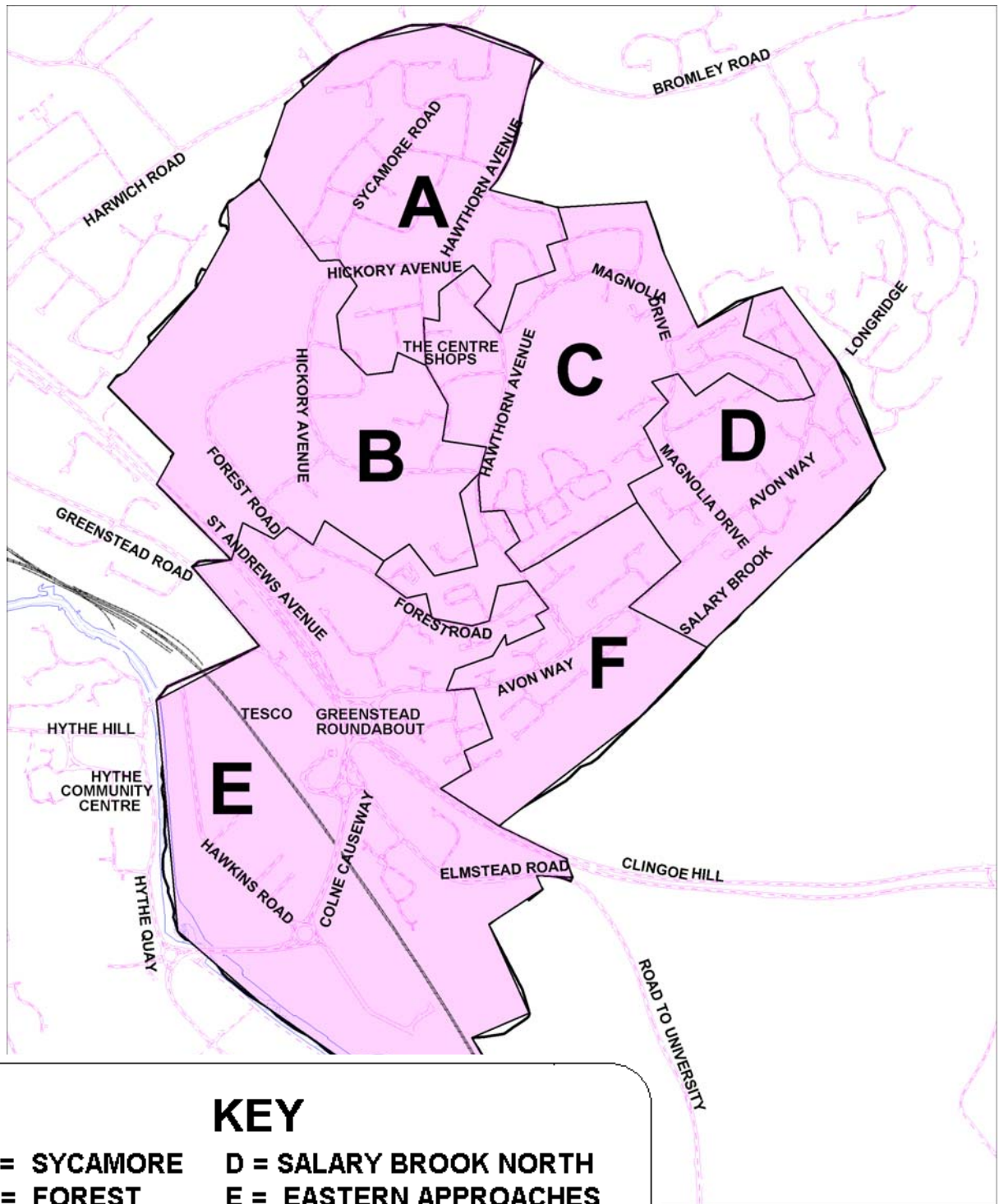
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2. ST ANDREWS WARD¹



KEY

A = SYCAMORE **D = SALARY BROOK NORTH**
B = FOREST **E = EASTERN APPROACHES**
C = MAGNOLIA **F = SALARY BROOK SOUTH**

—— WARD BOUNDARIES
—— L-SOA BOUNDARIES

¹ The Office for National Statistics introduced the small areas displayed in this map – officially known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas – in 2004. Small areas have an average population of 1,500 people and each was in Colchester currently consists of between one and six small areas. There are 104 small areas in Colchester, 863 in Essex and 32,482 in England. The small areas were named with the assistance of the Community Development team to enable easier recognition of the areas to which they relate.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this research was to assess the effectiveness of Community Development investment in St Andrews. Findings are based on interviews with people working in the area to improve the quality of life, focus groups with young people and police data.

In 2004 research was undertaken in St Andrews to investigate issues that people who lived and worked in the ward felt needed to be tackled. Seven key priority areas were identified from this Community Strengths Assessment.

Conclusions are organized under the headings of these priorities (sections 3.2 – 3.7 summarised below², and described in full in the Findings section of this report), but will start with an assessment of interviewees' feelings regarding these priorities (3.1), two and a half years on from the completion of the assessment, and will finish by assessing what further further priorities interviewees' identified as relevant to St Andrews (3.8).

3.1 Feeling towards existing priorities

This first section of the evaluation looked at interviewees' feelings towards those priorities outlined in the 2004 assessment for the ward. In general, there was strong agreement with the priorities that had been identified. Developing facilities for young people saw the strongest agreement, with all of those interviewed agreeing either slightly or strongly with this as a priority. Interviewees were also asked to what extent their confidence had increased or decreased over the last two years, in terms of making an impact on those same priorities.

Again, the majority of interviewees felt that their confidence had increased either a little or a lot in terms of the impact that the community could make on each key area. One of those receiving the greatest confidence increase was "supporting local meeting places". This is unsurprising given that, at the stage of the Needs Assessment data collection, the Community Centre was just at its completion³ stages. As such, it has been open now for just over two and a half years⁴ and has made a massive impact on the very existence of local meeting spaces over that time period.

The priority receiving the most mixed response was "targeting community groups for business planning advice, funding and training". Several interviewees felt unable to comment on this, and several more were unsure

² Two of the seven priorities have been combined into one here; ASB and facilities for young people; as much of the intervention to address these two priorities overlaps.

³ The Greenstead Community Centre was completed in October 2003, and opened in November of the same year. The interviews carried out with local community and voluntary groups within the St Andrews ward Community Strengths Assessment were carried out between October and November 2003, with the household survey being carried out in February of 2004.

⁴ Just over two and a half years from the time of interviews being carried out for this St Andrews Evaluation, August 2006; compared with the opening of the centre in November 2003.

whether they felt more confident about the community's ability to make an impact on this.

3.2 Joint working and networking

Evidence suggests a high level of joint working between those community, voluntary and statutory groups interviewed. A total of 16 of the 20 interviewees stated they attend the Health for Greenstead forum group, and five of these 16 spoke specifically of this meeting in terms of its value as a forum for joint working. A majority also stated that they attend numerous other subgroups on a weekly basis. Sixteen interviewees again felt that communication between groups and agencies in the ward has increased over the last two and a half years, and ten of these felt that this was due to the work and involvement of the Community Development Worker (CDW). This seems relatively fitting, given the positive comments about the Health for Greenstead forum provided, and the fact that the CDW plays a key role within this group as the Chairperson.

3.3 Community Participation and Networking

A very large majority, 18 of the 20 interviewees, felt that there had been more community activity in St Andrews ward over the last two years. In addition, all interviewees felt that they had become more involved with the local community over the same time period. 14 of the 20 interviewees felt that more local residents had been involved with their community/voluntary group or organisation over the last two years (for example, through volunteering).

At a number of stages throughout the interview, several interviewees stated their concerns that CDW intervention within St Andrews ward is likely to be reduced over the coming months⁵, indicating a recognition of the continuing importance of the CDW role in the area. That said, many groups stated that they were well established in the area and that their success in reaching the local community is down to more factors than just the community development intervention (for example, seven of the fourteen interviewees responding felt that increases seen to residents involvement in their work was due solely to the work of the CDW). This in itself can be seen as a success⁶, as a core component of community development work is to build capacity, both of organizational and physical infrastructure. Once the community has the resources and capacity to develop itself, the community development worker will withdraw, enabling the community itself to take over.

⁵ It was identified in Colchester Borough Council's analysis of the 2004 Indices of Deprivation, that significant 'pockets' or 'small areas' of deprivation exist within two additional wards outside of those currently tackled by Colchester's Community Development team. As a result, small areas within Shrub End and New Town wards are now included in current Community Development work, such that the existing Community Development Officers are splitting their time between these wards.

⁶ By "success" I do not mean a success solely accountable to the Community Development team, but a success for the community as a whole.

3.4 Support local meeting places, specifically the GCA and the GCC

As mentioned, interviewees felt most confidence about a move towards achieving this priority; mainly as they have been able to see over the last two and a half years the Community Centre's growing range of activities on offer.

Local support of the Greenstead Community Centre was evident through many comments made by interviewees, specifically about the changing atmosphere they have witnessed in the centre over recent months. A change to the way in which the cafe in particular was run, which meant that local residents volunteered to run it on week days (with the Friday afternoon session being set aside for the youth cafe), has led to comments such as *"its a large estate, so its always hard to engage lots of people...but in the last six months or so its really taken off"*.

Interviewees were also asked specifically about the development of services at the centre, and the youth café. Five of the 20 interviewees felt that they could respond to questions around the planning of such activities. All of these five felt that the planning of the café and other services had been either quite or very successful. Two interviewees commented about the lack of funding for the youth café, and how its popularity meant that they would like it to be open more nights a week (and, indeed, this came up as a request at the first young peoples' focus group). It should be noted that during the production of this report, £50,000 was gained for this purpose.

3.5 Diverting young people from ASB, and developing new facilities in accordance with what they want to see in the area

There has been a significant increase in facilities available for young people in the area. This section evaluated specifically some of these, including the Magnolia Fields, lights, CCTV and shelter project, intended to improve safety and security for young people on the estate; and the Underpass project which involved the cleaning and clearing of the Salary Brook South underpass, followed by the painting of a Mural in the underpass by local young people, and students from Essex University. Those who felt able to comment generally found these projects to have been successfully carried out. Typical issues stated were delays to completion dates, particularly with regards to the Underpass project. Dedication from a core group of people was cited as the main reason for the projects being successfully completed in spite of difficulties.

However the focus groups pointed to difficulties with communicating some of the activities available for young people (particularly those on offer at the centre) to certain parts of the ward, in particular Hunwick Road. They also suggested peaks of ASB activity occurring in the Hunwick Road area (this is confirmed in the ASB analysis, see below). In general, focus groups and statements from interviewees indicated that ASB remains quite high in the ward, although the presence of PCSOs has helped ease people's minds about the dangers. Some of the young people stated they had seen improvements, but that every now and then major incidents would still occur.

In addition levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were assessed over the three financial years for which most current data was available at the time of embarking on this project (2002/2003, 2003/2004, 2004/2005). This assessment found incident⁷ numbers within the ward to have increased between the first two years of analysis, before decreasing to a rate below that seen in the first year (from 151.5 per 1,000 population in 2002/2003 to 145.5 in 2004/2005). Offence numbers showed a similar pattern, but although rates in 2004/2005 decreased from 2003/2004, they were in fact higher than those found in 2002/2003, the first year of analysis. The roads experiencing the highest numbers of incidents and offences were Hawthorne Avenue, and Magnolia Drive. Hunwick Road had a high level of incidents (3rd highest of all roads in the ward) but much lower for offences (9th highest), as did Greenstead Road (which came out as 4th highest for incidents, and 2nd for offences). Further analysis showed incident numbers to be decreasing on Hawthorne Avenue, but actually shows an increase in offence numbers along this road (despite a decrease between 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, the final rate was still higher than that found in 2002/2003). This pattern is mirrored in the analysis of the other major thoroughfares in the ward; Forest Road, Avon Way and Magnolia Drive; which all show in general an overall reduction in incident numbers, but a slight increase in offence numbers. Less clear patterns are seen at the small area level of analysis, with rates however still peaking in 2003/2004 (rates for both incidents and offences being particularly high in Salary Brook South and Magnolia).

As pointed out in the 2004 Crime and Drugs Audit, this apparent peak in 2003/2004 may be owing to changes in the crime recording system at that time⁸. Another possibility for this peak could be that the PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers) first began operating in St Andrews ward in December 2003. An enhanced police presence may have led both to greater numbers of offences recorded, and to a raised feeling of safety within residents' consciousness, leading to a slight decrease in incidents reported (as is the general pattern that has been observed; in spite of peaks in 2003/2004, an overall pattern of reduction is evident). If this is the case, the reductions seen in 2004/2005 offences may indicate the effects of the PCSOs in the area beginning to plateau, following a peak in 2003/2004, when the PCSOs first starting to patrol the area. This is however just a suggestion, and should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

⁷ 'Incidents' refers to Police Reported Crime data which is not based on independent evidence, but on calls received by the police from members of the public reporting individual incidents. Police Recorded Crime data is referred to as 'offences'. 'Offences' are slightly more reliable in the sense that they are based on the number of offences, and are therefore based on evidence. However 'incidents' give a unique perspective on the types of complaints people have about their neighbourhoods.

⁸ The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced in April 2002, in order to ensure greater consistency between police forces in recording crime and to take a more victim orientated approach to crime recording. It resulted in an increase in the number of crimes recorded. It is likely that there has been some continuing impact on the number of recorded crimes in 2003/2004, as a result of audits to further improve crime recording. However, whilst this could account for the fluctuations in the recorded crime data, it would not do so for the incident data.

The most encouraging finding within the ASB data, is the apparent decline of youth disorder incidents over the time period analysed. A peak is clear in 2003/2004, but the final figure for youth disorder in 2004/2005 was 338 incidents, compared with 366 in 2002/2003; showing a decline, albeit small, in numbers. Youth disorder remains by far the most common type of disorder incident in the ward in 2004/2005, and criminal damage by far the most common type of offence in the same year.

3.6 Funding for community and voluntary groups

A good amount of funding has been attracted to St Andrews since the completion of the Community Strengths Assessment, with notable intervention from the CDW. Funding levels for groups in this ward tend to be fairly high (this was noted in the 2004 assessment). Five interviewees stated they had received funding advice from staff at Colchester Borough Council, and three cited advice from C CVS (a total of 8 stated they had recently received funding advice). In general, this priority was seen as less important than the other priorities outlined for the ward. This may suggest that sufficient advice is available for groups (and so they are less concerned about this), however, it may also suggest that groups are not as aware as they could be of the advice available to them. Every effort should be made therefore to further advertise the capacity of the council to provide this guidance. It should be noted however that those who had received guidance, spoke very positively about the council's intervention.

3.7 Building Equality and Diversity

Some specific achievements in relation to this priority include the "Greenstead Goes Global" event, where pupils from local primary schools were involved in a variety of cultural activities, including African drumming; the "Global Voices" presentations on different backgrounds and cultures to Primary schools in Greenstead; and the "English Lessons for Refugees" project, through which student volunteers provide refugees with English lessons. The Greenstead Goes Global event was the only of these which interviewees were specifically asked about. This was viewed as having been a success by those who were involved, with one interviewee commenting that the day had a "lasting impact on the young people involved".

Owing to an oversight in the production of the questionnaire, interviewees were not asked whether they currently have an Equal Opportunities policy within their group or organization, or whether they feel sufficiently supported in this regard. This priority was however still viewed as one of high importance by interviewees (all interviewees stated that this was either quite or very important as a priority), indicating that it may be worth some further consultation, in order to view whether local groups and organizations would be interested in receiving further guidance producing policies where they do not have one.

3.8 What Now? What interviewees feel still needs to be addressed in the area

Interviewees indicated that the biggest concern locally, outside of the identified priorities, was litter. A number of issues, including the recent

removal of a civic amenity facility in the area, was said to have increased the concerns in the area around this.

There was a level of consensus that, whilst ASB remains an important priority, there is a wide range of facilities for children and young people now in existence in the ward. Two interviewees pointed to the need for facilities for younger children to be improved, particularly in relation to the possibility of increasing “early intervention” strategies to tackle ASB. There was also consensus around the importance of maintaining consultation links with young people at all stages of the introduction of new activities.

Interestingly, when asked what additional support interviewees would like to have from the council, four interviewees mentioned the need for more structured guidance regarding the completion of funding bids, and other areas such as employment law, and health and safety issues. Perhaps it might be worth considering a learning event for groups to understand more around such issues. This could incorporate additionally advice on equal opportunities policies, and around producing good funding bids. Of course, the “structured guidance” requested by some groups at this stage, is naturally likely to prove difficult, given the unique nature of any funding bid. However perhaps some generic guidance notes could be produced; or at least increased promotion of what advice is available, and contact names and numbers of those who are able to assist. It should be noted that interviewees did at other stages comment on and recognize the value of the individual nature of support, particularly with regards to assistance with funding bids (see section 7.2.5).

