

ST ANNES EVALUATION

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH
COUNCIL 2007**

1 About this Report

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 sarah.hardwick@colchester.gov.uk

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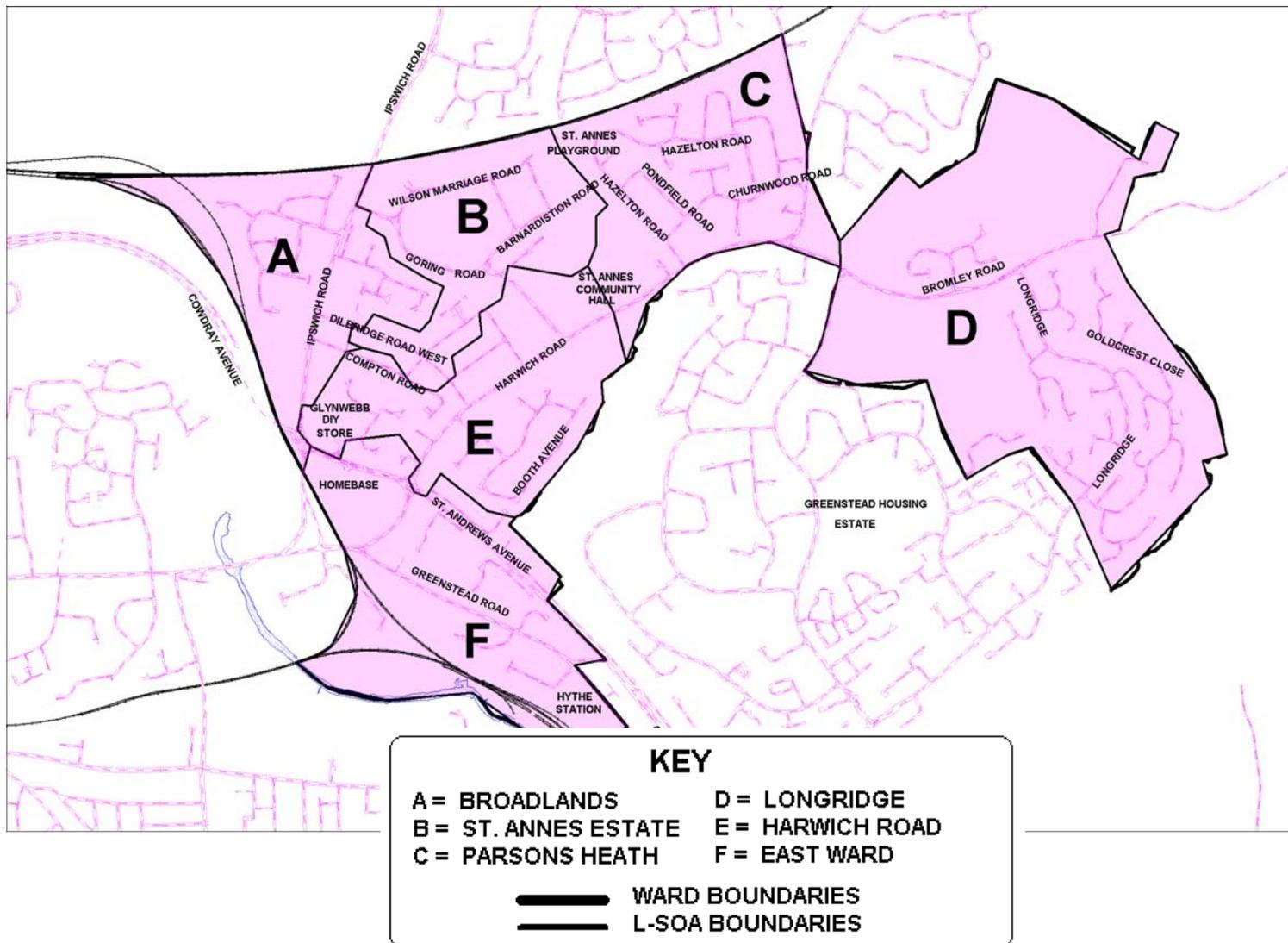
Maps

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2. St Annes ward

St Annes ward is displayed on the map below. The map also shows the six small areas in the ward¹



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 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 Annes. Findings are based on interviews with people working in the area to improve the quality of life, a focus group with young people, and police data. Conclusions are organised under the headings of the priorities identified for St Annes in the Community Strengths Assessment report produced by Colchester Borough Council in 2004², in order to take a view as to what has been achieved in relation to each since the document's publication, and how relevant these priorities still are.

The Community Strengths Assessment identified eight key priorities or areas for development of the ward (See section 5, Establishing Local Need). For the purpose of this report, the priorities have been regrouped to give four headings. Firstly some general themes emerging from the research will be summarised, and finally a summary of suggestions for future development of the ward will be given.

3.1 General Themes

Whilst just ten interviewees were sourced for this evaluation (see Methodology, section 6), all of these interviewees were experienced "key players" in community work and activity in St Annes, all having been involved in their work for more than one year, and four having been involved for more than five years. Eighty per cent of these interviewees stated that Colchester Borough Council (including the Community Development team, Colchester Borough Homes, Planning staff, etc., in their classification of the council) had helped them to achieve their objectives for working in the St Annes area. A further seven of the 10 interviewees felt that quality of life in St Annes had improved over the past three years.

3.2 Assessing Individual Priorities

As stated the eight priorities previously identified for St Annes have been regrouped to give four sections here.

3.2.1 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and Young People

² Access the full report on-line under "c-consultation" by following the link <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/community>

Interviewees felt that addressing ASB and introducing activities for young people remained two of the most important priorities for the St Annes community to address.

When asked about what achievements have been made in St Annes over the past three years, one interviewee stated an increase in the visible police presence in the ward, whilst three stated that they felt that ASB and overall crime had reduced over that time period.

During a focus group held at the Willow Brook School, young people in St Annes mentioned that, whilst in general there was consensus that St Annes had become a nicer place to live (citing in particular how the school had improved), there were continuing persistent problems. When probed, participants at the young peoples' focus group identified litter, nuisance youths and drinking, loud cars, and neighbourhood disputes as their areas of concern.

Analysis of ASB in the ward³ identified that incident and offence rates⁴ in St Annes were similar to those seen in Colchester. Rates in St Annes were actually slightly lower than those for Colchester for the three years (2003/2004 – 2005/2006) analysed,⁵ but followed a similar pattern. Broadly speaking the pattern indicates a slight increase in incident rates over the three years, and a slight decrease in offence rates.

³ It should be noted that there are a number of caveats to the analysis of this data, covered in the notes of all relevant figures in section 8.3.1. A prime example of this is that not all offences could be pinpointed to a specific small area, as only postcodes and roads are recorded for offences (unlike for incidents, where co-ordinates are provided enabling the data to be easily mapped). For some recorded offences, no postcode data is given, and the road recorded sits across a number of small areas in the ward. Any such offences had to be omitted from the small area analysis. For some years, this amounted to as much as 15.5% of the total offences that year. This may make the small area analysis in particular misleading.

⁴ See Methodology, section 6, for an explanation of the difference between incidents and offences.

⁵ It was considered surprising that St Annes showed rates slightly below the borough rates, given that for many years reducing ASB in St Annes has been a priority both for Colchester Borough Council and for Colchester neighbourhood policing teams. Having checked the data and discussed this with Intelligence Researchers at Colchester police, it was suggested that the borough rates may appear higher as a result of the "skewing effect" of the town centre wards, particularly Castle, which experiences a far higher number of ASB incidents and offences than any other ward in the borough. In addition, this data was checked against analysis of all crimes by ward for 2004/2005, as included within the Colchester Borough Council Crime "Life Chances" report (access online via <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/community>). This report again showed the rate of all crime in St Annes to be slightly below the borough rate, whilst wards including Castle, New Town and St Andrews had rates in excess of the borough rate. For a fuller discussion of this, see section 8.3.1. Furthermore, the incident and offence rates noted in the St Annes Estate small area were actually far in excess of the Colchester borough rate (as is discussed further in this summary), showing a pocket of high ASB within the ward as a whole, whilst the rates for the remaining small areas in the ward are considerably lower.

For both incidents and offences, Harwich Road in St Annes was the road with the highest count of ASB in the most recent year of analysis (although it should be noted that Harwich Road is a particularly long road, sitting across three of the small areas⁶ in the ward). This was followed by Wilson Marriage Road, in St Annes Estate. St Annes Estate remains for all three years of analysis, the small area with the highest rates of ASB incidents and offences of all the six small areas in the ward. Rates in St Annes Estate are in fact considerably higher than the borough average ASB offence rates, for all three years (in 2005/2006 for example, St Annes Estate had a rate more than 20 offences per 1,000 population in excess of the borough rates; of 52.19 offences per 1,000 population compared with 37.23 per 1,000 in Colchester borough). Harwich Road small area had the second highest rate of ASB offences, after St Annes Estate. Interestingly, these two small areas were the only of the total six in the ward, to show an overall reduction in offence rates over the three years (from 39.27 offences per 1,000 population to 26.68 for and from 59.76 to 52.19 between 2003/2004 and 2005/2006, for Harwich Road and St Annes Estate respectively).

St Annes Estate and Harwich Road were again the small areas with the highest and second highest rates of ASB incidents respectively, in the ward as a whole. All small areas in St Annes saw an overall increase in incident numbers of the three years, mirroring the borough pattern. Incident rates were again significantly above the borough average in St Annes Estate, for all three years (in 2004/2005, rates were in fact over double the borough rate in this small area, being 215.88 incidents per 1,000 population compared with 92.05 per 1,000 in the borough).

Criminal Damage is the most common offence type in St Annes, and youth disorder/youth nuisance the most common incident type. Counts of youth disorder have increased over the three years from 180 in 2003/2004 to 232 in 2005/2006. Incident data does however reflect public perceptions, rather than independent evidence. It *may* therefore be the case that this increase is as a result of greater confidence that the police will take action. Indeed, as we have seen three interviewees commented on the perceived increased police presence in the ward.

⁶ These small areas are an Office for National Statistics (ONS) sub-ward geography otherwise known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas. These areas have been named with the assistance of the Colchester Borough Council Community Development Officers for easier identification of the neighbourhoods that they refer to (see map, section 2).

Since the assessment, significant improvements have been made (both academically and socially/behaviourally⁷) to the former St Annes' School, which reopened in 2005 as The Willow Brook School. Furthermore, the All Faces group has introduced a number of fixed timescale projects which have provided activities for young people in the school holidays since 2005 (see section 7). With regards to achievements made in the ward, two interviewees mentioned the opportunities provided for young people by All Faces, and seven commented on the improvements to the school (one specifically highlighting the introduction of CCTV there).

3.2.2 Developing leisure, recreational and social facilities, and supporting the new Community Centre

Eight of the ten interviewees feel more confident about the community's ability to make an impact on the priority of developing leisure, recreational and social facilities. One however stated that they felt the same as they had done three years ago, expanding by saying that:

“the centre is in place...but its not being used to its full potential yet....there arent enough local groups using the available space”

All Faces, and its introduction within St Annes of social and recreational activities for young people, has already been mentioned here (see 3.2.2), and may account in part for the stated increases in confidence. The Oak Tree Community Centre, opened in October 2006, is the other key step forward for St Annes in terms of this priority; providing as it does a venue for local groups to meet.

It is no surprise, given that the building has been completed and opened since the publication of the Community Strengths Assessment, that nine of the ten interviewees feel more confident about the community's ability to make an impact on the priority of “supporting the new Community Centre.” The same nine interviewees also consider this still to be an important priority for St Annes.

Interviewees were split in response to the question of whether enough is being done in order to encourage local groups into the new centre. Five stated that not enough is being done, but three of these five felt that this was mainly by virtue of the relative newness of the centre, and that this would come in time. One felt a lot of publicity had already been carried out, whilst

⁷ See also, the 2007 Ofsted Report for the Willowbrook School, available on-line at <http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/schools>

others insisted more outreach work was needed. One interviewee stated that, whilst the centre and its' trustees should be praised for allowing certain activities for young people to be run from it, there also existed a tension in that *“the centre is not good for young people...it's too new....people can't relax there; there's a sense of worry that someone, especially young people ,might ruin it...and its not as open as it could be for that reason”*

3.2.3 Helping to build equality by encouraging local groups to develop equal opportunities policies, and assisting community groups in accessing funding and training advice

“Helping to build equality by encouraging local groups to develop equal opportunities policies” was the priority for which interviewees felt least confident about the communitys' ability to make an impact. Six interviewees felt that this was still important, but eight stated that their confidence had either decreased or stayed the same with regards to impacting on this. Comments included:

“developing policies is not essential; achieveing the target is. Respect for individuals needs to be increased as it is still low in the ward”, and “issues around deprivation and culture still exist”

The message from interviewees seemed to be that embedded prejudices and attitudes towards others in the ward are still in existence, and that there needs to be more attention paid to how to tackle this practically; and that developing equal opportunities policies for groups needs to be a much lower priority. This perhaps reflects the poor wording of the question itself, and that too much emphasis was put in the question on the development of policies; whereas in fact addressing these prejudices as a whole is equally a priority for the Community Development Worker (by “addressing issues of equality and diversiy as they arise”, as is stated in the Community Strengths Assessment). It is encouraging to note the comments of one interviewee however who stated:

“policies will not lead to changes, respect for individuals will. This is what the kids have gained at Willow Brook”

This comment implies that these embedded attitudes may start to change, with the behavioural changes which are being encouraged at the local primary school. Indeed, behaviour witnessed at the focus group from the young participants at the Willow Brook school backs up this possibility (See section 8.3.1).

All interviewees felt that helping groups to access funding and training advice remained an important priority for St Annes. Six interviewees mentioned that they had sought some such advice in the past year, two having accessed this from CCVS, and two from Colchester Borough Council. On a practical level, Colchester Borough Council have been heavily involved in accessing funding streams for local groups in the past three years, notably for activities arranged by All Faces.

3.2.4 Promoting and encouraging community participation, joint working and networking

All interviewees felt that promoting and encouraging joint working and networking was an important priority, with nine agreeing that encouraging community participation was important.

Nine interviewees felt that there had been more community activity in St Annes over the past three years, and seven of these nine felt that that was, at least in part, due to the work and involvement of the Community Development Worker.

Whilst a majority of seven also felt more confident about the community's ability to make an impact on the priority of joint working and networking, three felt neither more nor less confident, and two of these three stated the disbanding of the St Annes Forum⁸ as their reason for this.

As is outlined in section 7, the board of trustees managing the Community Centre have come to act in part as a replacement for the St Annes Forum, by carrying out a lot of the joint agency working for the ward. However, the fact that the disbanding of the St Annes Forum was mentioned here by these of interviewees suggests that this means existing joint working *may* be excluding some of the "key players" in community work and activity for the ward. As such consideration should perhaps be given to reinstating the St Annes Forum, or finding an alternative similar means by which to initiate further joint working

3.3 What Now? Ideas for future development of the St Annes ward

When asked what further concerns interviewees have about St Annes, three mentioned ongoing concerns about the absence of the St Annes Forum. One

⁸ The St Annes Forum was a networking and joint working forum for all those involved in community, statutory and voluntary work in the St Annes ward. It was disbanded in 2005 as plans for the Oak Tree Community Centre began to become more of a priority, and the Board of Trustees for the centre were formed, subsequently taking over a lot of the work/discussion which was previously the domain of the Forum.

stated specifically that it ought to be resurrected; a theme which has already been noted in 3.2.4 above.

When asked what the Community Development team should consider doing to further improve quality of life in St Annes, two interviewees stated simply that she should “continue doing what shes doing”, praising her for her part in what has been achieved in the ward. A further two noted the importance of working on short term goals, rather than long term projects, in order to motivate and instigate more community activity. This interviewee stated:

“we need to attempt manageable, low key programmes...not ones that are on any grand scale, but perhaps programmes that focus on basic living skills...like financial planning, and parenting skills.”

Interestingly when asked about what further support Colchester Borough Council could offer them, two interviewees stated they felt supported as it is, and three could not think of any more support that could benefit them. This may suggest that support levels are already fairly well in place; or perhaps rather that groups in St Annes are relatively self sufficient (which in turn, could be seen to contradict the finding that a forum to instigate joint working may be lacking in the ward).

Overall the impression given from a lot of the interviewees at this stage was that things are progressing in St Annes; certainly in relation to the Community Centre, and particularly the Willow Brook School. That said, a level of inertia with regards to joint working was also suggested. This is perhaps a surprising perception, given the evidence of joint working that exists from activities carried out in the ward over the past three years (the presence of Sure Start in the community centre; the introduction of the Neighbourhood Action Panel to the ward; jointly accessed funding between Colchester Borough Council and All Faces; and the board of trustees managing the centre, for example; see also section 7). The suggestion seems to be however that joint working is still ongoing, but at times perhaps in less of a formal way, which may potentially be to the exclusion of some active groups in the ward. Nevertheless, the successes outlined in section 7, the apparent reductions in ASB offence rates in St Annes Estate and Harwich Road, the positive achievements recognised, and the increased confidence in relation to many of the priorities for the ward, show a number of clear steps forward for St Annes, when comparing the ward with its’ situation in 2004, at the time of publication of the Community Strengths Assesment.

