

Community Well-being

Guildford Borough contains a range of contrasting environments, from isolated rural hamlets to vibrant town centre. People, with all their complex health, education, transport, housing and leisure needs, live in rural villages, commuter dormitories, urban centre, suburbs and the open countryside. The variety is enormous but a sense of community is important to everyone and the partnership aims to help communities develop across all the areas of the Community Plan.



Issues raised during public consultation

- Embracing diversity and equality of opportunity.
- Public involvement.
- Support to children and vulnerable people.
- Tackling social inequalities and rural issues.
- Safety and accessibility, including transport.
- Lifelong learning.
- Buildings and facilities for community use.

The Community Well-being Action Group

The Community Well-being Action Group is a partnership which intends to build on existing initiatives and services by taking forward key actions suggested during the consultation process and workshops.

These include:

- Integrating the various forms of community transport, particularly the booking systems.
- Rethinking the role of the library service, especially in the areas of:
 - Outreach to schools and homes.
 - Information and communications technology.
 - Opening hours.
- Links with community facilities.
- Lifelong learning, including a more community-

orientated role for schools; taking learning to people and more use of the internet and distance learning.

- Childcare.
- Young people's facilities, groups and needs.
- Improved dialogue and facilities for travellers.
- Creation of an inventory of community buildings.
- Developing the take-up of membership, particularly among young people, of arts groups, environmental bodies and sports clubs.

In view of the diversity of issues, action to implement these proposals is likely to require a network approach through links with community groups and volunteers, as well as statutory partners. This presents challenges as well as opportunities.

The Community Well-being Action Group is keen to work with individuals or groups that would like to take a

The action plan

The joint strategic priority of the community planning partners is to improve the well-being of the whole community, acknowledging that disadvantage and deprivation exists despite Guildford's general economic success and affluence.

Some of the areas of concern are reflected in the other action plans and others through specific initiatives, many of which reflect the very practical suggestions made during the consultation process.

Guildford has a wide and diverse range of community support activities with a strong culture and history of volunteer effort working alongside the statutory agencies or independently.

There are hundreds of people working in a voluntary capacity right across the spectrum from children and youth to older people, through arts, leisure and sports to personal care. They already provide a substantial capacity for community cohesion in areas such as:

- Lifelong learning through the Community Learning Plan.
- Library related activities.
- Healthy living programmes.
- Community support and involvement.
- Community Safety projects.
- Community transport services.
- Volunteer support, including through joint grant aid.
- Fire and Rescue Services.

lead or work with one or more of the projects. Although money is always important, the community is itself the major resource with the potential to take the initiative on many of the proposals. Local people are best placed to know what support they can harness while the statutory agencies will provide support (including buildings and facilities) and assist with co-ordination.

Housing

Money, interest rates, the strength or weakness of the economy, population change and environmental protection all affect the ability of people to provide a roof over their heads. The market is

nothing if not sophisticated.

In Guildford, a buoyant economy intensifies pressure for more housing to be built. As the market comes up against policies of planning restraint, however, the cost of existing houses is driven up, leaving local families unable to afford them. When the prices fall again, people are vulnerable to negative equity and the loss of their homes. Affordable housing is understandably, therefore, top of your list of priorities.

The Community Plan partners all

recognise the importance of housing to people in the community and to the running of businesses and services and they are working together to provide a coordinated response to future housing needs and pressures. But because housing is a business as well as a service, the action plan has to be robust and rooted in economic fact.

Working together has achieved a multi-million pound package of affordable homes throughout the borough, a very real success story.

Your priorities for housing in Guildford Borough

- Key workers (public sector staff) given higher priority than local business needs. Young people, lower income groups and local families also priorities.
- Need to balance housing against threat to open spaces, large gardens and green belt.
- Warnings of pressure building in North Guildford, overcrowded housing and the strain on infrastructure.
- Need to balance town centre housing against business needs, with preference for brown field sites and affordable housing in the centre.
- Rural housing need, alongside opposition to the 4,000 new homes as proposed by Surrey County Council's draft Structure Plan.
- Strengthening the small homes policy, building small units, increased use of Housing Associations and a minimum 30 per cent affordable housing in all new developments.
- More council houses and sheltered homes and the release of finance from the sale of council houses.
- Need to keep affordable housing genuinely affordable.
- Need to ensure open space and play facilities are provided within or close to housing developments.

The action plan

So far...

Balancing needs and pressures is a continuously evolving task and the Community Plan brings together both housing providers and people from the community who have expressed interest in housing through the public consultation process.

An important step has been the creation of the **Guildford Homes Partnership**. This partnership of housing associations and GBC is currently developing one of the largest affordable housing investment programmes in Surrey:

- Investing some £65 million to build over 500 new homes by 2007. This includes 180 affordable homes at Queen Elizabeth Park, Stoughton, and other homes on sites in Guildford, Ash and the rural villages.

The **Guildford Homes Partnership Housing Strategy 2002-2007** also includes specific projects targeting issues including rural housing, homelessness and supported housing.

Another key step has been the establishment, as a result of the consultation process, of a Housing Action Group. This working group will be made up of members of the Guildford Homes Partnership and voluntary bodies such as homeless help groups and faith-based housing groups. It is hoped to include representatives of the wider housing and property

industry and also members of the public. The **Housing Action Group** will look at need and demand and develop a more robust strategic framework bringing together the planning process and housing policies. These are processes over which there is local influence.

What next?

Future opportunities include Guildford Railway Station redevelopment involving international architect Lord Rogers, which should provide several hundred more affordable homes over the next few years.

The **Housing Action Group Plan** will focus on:

- The local housing market.
- Housing demand and need.
- Housing conditions.
- The effect of trends in the local economy and employment market.
- The planning process.
- The role of the private sector in helping to meet housing need.
- Use of the Guildford Borough Housing Stock.
- Resources available through:
 - GBC land ownership
 - Sites identified through Urban capacity study
 - Financial resources of the Council
 - Private sector funding
 - Working with local employers.