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Chairman’s Introduction

‘Godalming Together’

Welcome to Godalming Together’s Healthcheck Report.

‘Godalming Together’ is a group of local volunteers who took on the task of carrying out a ‘Market Town Healthcheck’ for Godalming, Farncombe and the surrounding villages of the rural hinterland.

The healthcheck is a tried and tested process for carrying out a town appraisal that has already taken place in over 300 towns.

The volunteers came forward as a result of two open public meetings and have shown enormous willingness to devote their time and expertise to the healthcheck project. They come from many different walks of life and along with their local knowledge they have brought with them a passion for their town and its future.

The Healthcheck process has given Godalming an opportunity to take the initiative at a local level.

The group has: -

- collected evidence to complete comprehensive worksheets
- conducted surveys using questionnaires
- interviewed lots of local people
- organised focus groups
- put on a public exhibition
- conducted public meetings

We hope that you will find this report useful and of interest.

Finally, it is important to give our thanks to all those individuals and organisations that have helped us with the healthcheck.

Throughout the project Godalming Together volunteers have been supported in their work by officers from Godalming Town Council, Waverley Borough Council and Surrey Community Action and I should like to thank those officers.

I would like to give particular thanks to all the many dedicated healthcheck volunteers and all the individual members of our community who responded to our surveys, questionnaires and attended the public events.

Signed

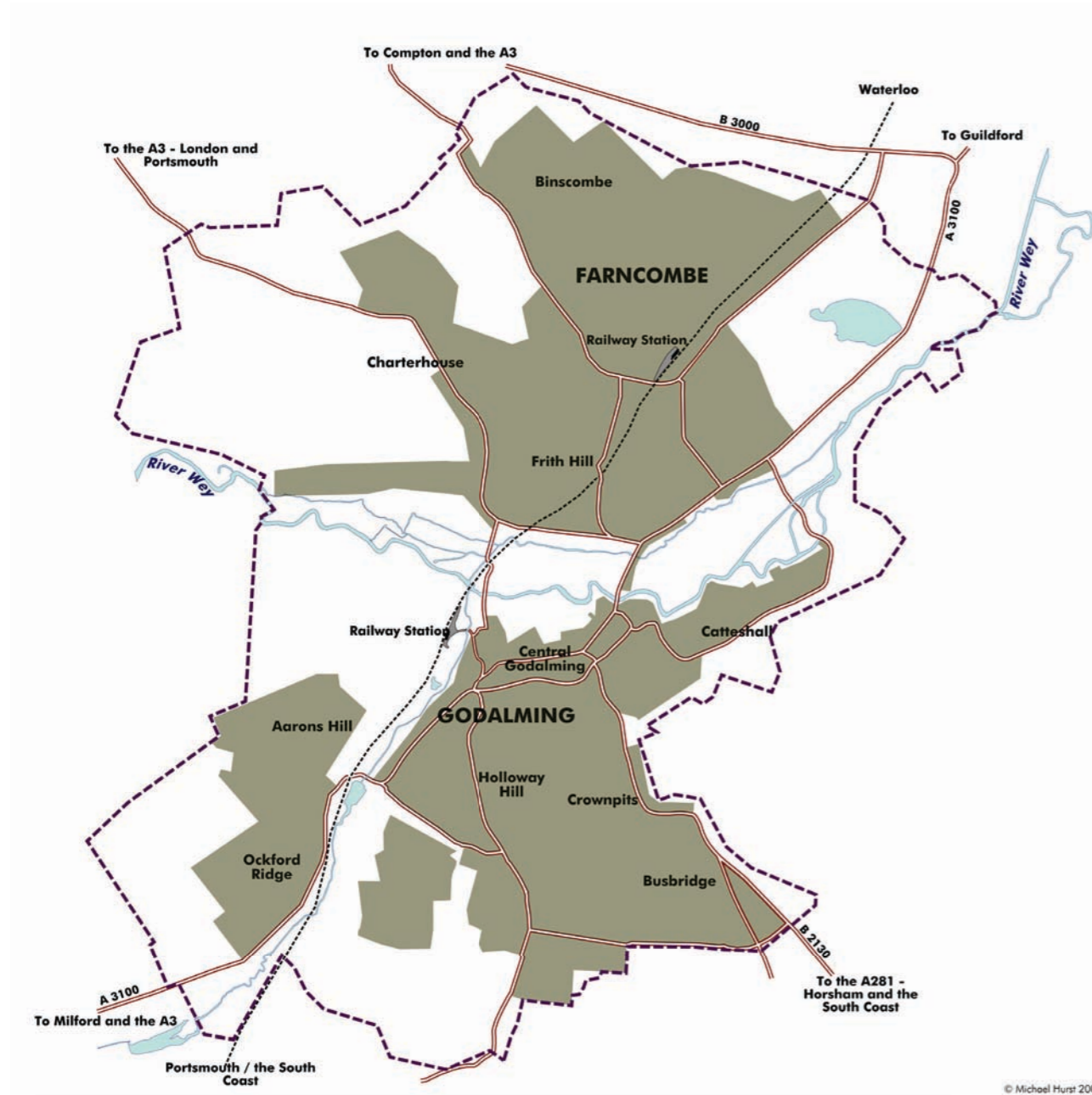


Chairman, Godalming Together.



What do we mean by “Godalming”?

For the purposes of this Healthcheck “Godalming” was defined as being the administrative area covered by Godalming Town Council and marked on Ordnance Survey maps as Godalming CP (CP meaning Civil Parish). That area is more or less the same as the area covered by the “GU7” postcode.



The administrative area that is Godalming encompasses a number of different communities¹ including Binscombe, Farncombe, Frith Hill, Aarons Hill, Ockford Ridge, Catteshall, Crownpits and (almost all of) Busbridge. Of these special attention is directed towards Farncombe because that community has a distinctive “village” centre of its own. “Godalming Together” was the title chosen for this Healthcheck: chosen to signify the unifying of a number of communities as one town – Godalming.

About this Report

This report is the culmination of a community led project and brings together the work of five different groups of volunteers – each group has contributed a chapter.

The Market Town Healthcheck methodology consists of a series of worksheets grouped under four headings: “**Social & Community**”, “**Transport**”, “**Environment**” and “**Economy**”. Under the leadership of a Healthcheck steering group four groups of volunteers formed to tackle each set of worksheets – researching the answers to the questions posed and developing their views as to what those answers meant for Godalming. Early in the process it was apparent that one issue, of particular relevance to Godalming, “**Youth**”, was not adequately covered by any one group and a fifth group was formed to look at issues relating to the town’s young people.

Each group has developed a series of action points – actions that, if carried out, would improve some aspect of life in Godalming. These are reproduced as “Action Points” in Chapter 6. The actions are aspirational and the list is not prioritised – the volunteers were advised not to worry about potential financial constraints – the only criterion upon which they were advised to exclude projects was whether or not a project would have community support. Many of the ideas emerging from the healthcheck were tested over the summer of 2007 either by a market research questionnaire sent to 25% of Godalming households or by a public exhibition held at the Wilfrid Noyce Centre.

These potential projects range from small discrete projects which could be set up and implemented quickly (for example, the introduction of secure cycle parking at stations which has already been implemented), to some complex projects which require detailed financial evaluation before applications for funding can

be submitted (for example, creation of a totally inclusive youth venue incorporating an internet café with counseling and information services in addition to music, arts and drama).

Turning the project ideas into reality through creating and implementing an Action plan will be part of Stage Two of the Healthcheck process. This later stage will involve:

- Establishing a Delivery Organisation²
- Identifying partners
- Recruiting additional volunteers
- Implementing some “quick wins”
- Securing funding
- Working up a detailed Action Plan

Underlying each chapter are the worksheets and a wealth of other evidence and where possible a cross reference is made, as a footnote, to that evidence – all those footnotes are to be found in the seventh chapter of this report. Nearly all of these endnotes contain a three-digit number in brackets and in bold script – like this: **(999)**. This number refers to the relevant document in the Healthcheck evidence base and that evidence base is published electronically. If you would like a disk containing the complete Healthcheck evidence base (or any individual document) then please contact the Town Clerk, Louise Goodfellow on 01483 523575 or atownclerk@godalming-tc.gov.uk.



Future Organisation

Now that the first stage of the Healthcheck is complete and our findings are in the succeeding pages, the Healthcheck Steering Group has considered the options for ensuring that this Vision is turned into reality, and the energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers that produced this report is not lost but retained and harnessed effectively for the benefit of the whole community.

Since over 300 market towns have successfully completed a Healthcheck, it is important to benefit from their experience and not re-invent the wheel.

The Healthcheck Steering Group has considered the options³ and recommends that:

- the future organisation should start as a Town Partnership and rapidly become a Community Interest Company, with defined objectives and priorities for the short and long term.
- The option of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation should be explored once the framework for the Partnership has been put in place.



1 Social & Community

Summary of our findings

- 1.1 One of the key findings of the Godalming Healthcheck process, though no surprise to the majority of its residents, is that Godalming is a very desirable place in which to live. 97.4% of residents surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with living in the Godalming area⁴. The town has a long and rich heritage and offers an attractive environment, a good range of family homes and a wide variety of local facilities including shops, services, leisure facilities, schools and churches. There is also an active community life with groups and organisations covering a broad spectrum of interests and activities⁵.
- 1.2 More than 21,000 people live in Godalming (21,103 at the 2001 Census) with that number being equally split between men and women. The 2001 population figure represents a 5% increase on the 1991 figure and evidence indicates that the population is still increasing⁶. The 2001 Census figures suggest that at that time the age profile of the population was broadly in line with the national average except that the town had a lower proportion of young adults (18 to 24 year olds) though this seemed to be characteristic of Surrey as a whole⁷.
- 1.3 Unemployment in the town is very low⁸. Compared with the national average Godalming has a significantly higher proportion of people employed in professional and managerial occupations and a correspondingly lower proportion employed in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs⁹. Educational attainment¹⁰ and average earnings are both significantly higher than the national average¹¹.
- 1.4 On the whole the population of Waverley (and by implication Godalming) is healthier than average with local mortality rates for heart disease, cancer and strokes for people under the age of 75 years all being lower than the national average¹². The population is also well served by General Practitioners with more than one doctor per thousand head of population being provided. Both GP surgeries in the town (one recently moved from Godalming High Street to Catteshall Mill and the other in Binscombe) are highly regarded.
- 1.5 Godalming is also one of the safest towns in the country – crime levels are low, although the fear of crime is higher than the actual incidence of crime¹³.
- 1.6 However, it would be wrong to conclude that life in Godalming is idyllic for all residents. The statistics that, on the whole, reveal Godalming residents to be “healthy, wealthy and wise” show a much more mixed picture when analysed at a more detailed level. The 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)¹⁴ show that Godalming has a small area deemed to be the most deprived in Waverley and the sixth most deprived in the whole of Surrey (there are a further two areas with high levels of deprivation in the town). Where pressures exist in Godalming, or where facilities are poor or absent, it is often these more vulnerable parts of the community that are most adversely affected.
- 1.7 One of the drawbacks of being a desirable place to live in is that not everyone who wants to reside in Godalming can afford to do so. There are concerns about housing supply in the town. While, as already said, the town has a good range of family homes the costs of this housing are high^{15 16 17}. There is an insufficient supply of lower priced accommodation in the owner occupied sector and a shortage of affordable housing either for rent or shared-ownership in the social housing sectors. In both sectors there is a particular shortage of two and three bedroom housing¹⁸. Evidence also suggests a lack of smaller good quality properties, close to facilities, suitable for older people.
- 1.8 Another pressure on housing is that a substantial proportion of the housing stock owned by Waverley Borough Council fails to meet the Decent Homes Standard and that the Authority continues to struggle to find the funds to bring the housing stock up to that standard¹⁹.
- 1.9 Some significant community facilities that

might be expected in a town the size of Godalming are missing; often this is explained by the town's proximity to Guildford where a wider range of facilities is provided. However, often those most in need of these facilities are those least able to travel to Guildford. For example, Godalming does not have medical drop-in clinics or a community hospital²⁰ so that people are forced to travel to obtain many diagnostic and treatment services that, in other towns, are available locally. There are also significant gaps in the mental health²¹ and sexual health services.

1.10 Also, while a comprehensive local authority sports/leisure facility is located at the Spectrum Centre in Guildford there is poor public provision of such facilities in Godalming – particularly when compared with the other three centres of population in Waverley. The Godalming Leisure Centre provides a swimming pool (in need of some refurbishment), a gym and limited sports facilities. The Godalming Leisure Needs Study carried out in 1999 identified a need for an additional sports hall in Godalming. Many residents wish to see appropriate facilities, particularly for young people (in the 10–16 age group), provided within the town thus avoiding the need to travel²². Our work on the needs of young people also revealed that there is no safe and accessible venue of their own in which young people can meet (see the Youth Chapter below).

1.11 There are many recreation grounds and open spaces provided within the town; however, the standard of maintenance of these facilities is variable and many require modernisation and refurbishment. The Holloway Hill Recreation ground (in Busbridge) and the Phillips Memorial grounds (in the Town Centre) are examples of well maintained facilities while Bowring field (in Farncombe) is an example of a neglected open space²³.

1.12 There is a plethora of community meeting places, of differing sizes and quality, distributed throughout the town; despite this some groups report difficulties in securing premises

at a reasonable cost and at certain times of the day. In particular performance groups report a lack of venues with appropriate facilities at a reasonable cost²⁴.

1.13 Many of the state schools in the town, including the Sixth Form College, are good or excellent, but some are not. This inconsistency in the standard of state education provision in the town creates tension with some schools being oversubscribed and others struggling to maintain role numbers. Some young children travel to schools a significant distance from their homes²⁵.

1.14 Our work identified a range of cultural activity and events within the town but also showed insufficient sources for communicating information about such activities and other community data²⁶. A survey of residents indicated that for them the most important sources of local information were the local newspapers, the Surrey Advertiser, the Godalming Times (now the Surrey Times), and the Messenger and that notice boards and posters were particularly important for obtaining information about local events²⁷. Godalming Museum, Waverley Borough Council, Godalming Town Council, Godalming Library, Guildford Tourist Office and various retailers all provide some information about the town and events, but no one provides a comprehensive service. Godalming has no central information service or information point for residents or visitors.

1.15 There is no Community Legal Service in Godalming although the national service Community Legal Service Direct is available via a national help line and a website. The Citizens Advice Bureau provides advice at a “general help” level but none of the many solicitors in Godalming have Legal Services Commission contracts. Presently the Legal Services Commission’s strategy to improve access to justice and to combat social exclusion is making little headway in the town.

1.16 Our work also showed that few shops and

