

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**3 DECEMBER 2015**

**REPORT OF  
CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

#### **REVIEW OF OPEN ACCESS PROVISION FOR 11-19 YEAR OLDS WITHIN STOCKTON-ON-TEES**

**Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Ann McCoy**

#### **SUMMARY**

1. The Universal/ Open-Access Youth Provision is a Stockton Borough Council (SBC) in-house delivered service that operates at locations across the borough and operates in a way that many would describe as the traditional 'youth clubs.' The service currently costs circa £470,000. In addition the Council provides subsidy and support to a range of organisations who provide culture and leisure opportunities for 11-19 year olds.
2. This report seeks support for the principle of focusing the Council's Open Access Youth Provision resources on the guidance and support to young people, rather than on the activities and settings in which that guidance and support is provided. This is based on a belief that there are suitable settings which are subsidised by the Council or run by partners who share our objectives for supporting young people.
3. The review affects 3 full time posts, 2 part time posts, and 30 sessional staff members involved in delivering the current service.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. Cabinet are asked to endorse the principle of focussing Open Access Youth Service resources on the provision of advice and guidance to young people, rather than on the settings and activities within which this support is provided.

5. Officers are authorised to explore in detail and consult upon the proposed service delivery options, and present a further report to Cabinet.

### **Reason for the Recommendations/Decision**

To allow the Council to respond to reducing budgets and explore alternative models for the delivery of Open Access Youth Services

#### 6. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

#### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing

a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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## DETAIL

6. The Universal Service is a safe and secure contact point where young people engage in fun activities whilst being supported through a trusting relationship with a key worker to deal with issues around relationships, substance-misuse, family issues, etc.
7. The Regional Youth Work Unit, the strategic body for youth work in the North East holds Stockton in high regard in terms of its provision and its people. However they do concede that in-house delivery of universal youth services, as currently configured is probably unsustainable and alternative models need to be considered to protect the integrity of youth work within the UK.
8. National guidance states that local authorities must make 'adequate provision' for the target group but does not go as far as to advocate what this must be. The statutory requirement is for the involvement of the young people in consultation over what they would like, and then to meet their aspirations as far as practicable.
9. The provision of positive activities for young people is a preventative approach which evidence suggests can reduce the likelihood of them engaging in negative and damaging behaviours such as substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.
10. The following evidence from the World Health Organisation focuses on sport although the sentiment is transferable to young people engaging in other, equivalent non-sporting activities:
  - Young people who engage in sports at school or in their communities are less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as cigarette smoking and drug use than non-sports participants
  - Young people involved in organised sports were more likely to report eating fruit and vegetables the previous day and less likely to be overweight
  - Organised sports have been associated with less anti-social behaviour
11. At the national scale, the BBC reported in 2014 that the amount of money spent on youth services such as youth clubs, out of school activities, together with teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol support for young people, has fallen by 36% in the past two years, equating to £438m. Cuts such as these are exacerbating 'poverty of opportunity' in many places and this in turn leads to future reductions in social mobility.

Youth services are of huge importance within local communities, given that they help develop long term resilience in young people, through improving life chances and addressing the impacts of poverty.

The National Youth Agency comments that:

*We're going to see more young people in the criminal justice system, more young people who perhaps aren't engaging in education. The cost of that to taxpayers is enormous compared to the very small investment in youth services.'*

12. Positive activities can be delivered in formal or informal settings. Informal positive activities are those for which young people can participate in on an informal basis, which might include turning up to a venue and participating in a range of activities from a menu on offer, e.g. casual sports such as football or pool or more sedentary activities such as arts and crafts.
13. Formal positive activities are those activities that young people make a commitment to participate in on a regular basis and will include activities such as being part of a sports team, a member of a theatre group or undertaking Duke of Edinburgh qualifications.
14. As a preventative measure it is difficult to target individuals rather than provide an open access service since we are providing advice to someone before they present the behaviours that would then identify them as belonging to a target cohort.
15. Young people in affluent communities are subject to social and relationship problems similar to their peers in lower socio-economic groups, they can lack guidance and positive role models and can present risk taking and inappropriate behaviours. However, there is a negative correlation between socio-economic status and the prevalence of such things as self-harm, teenage pregnancy, drug misuse and anti-social behaviour.
16. Therefore, in response to significant resource pressures, there must be an emphasis on key communities whose economic and social conditions tend to provide fewer positive opportunities, alongside a focus on the expert youth work intervention that provides the trusted guidance, rather than on the leisure activity that creates the setting in which this relationship is established.
17. Although circumstances will vary between individuals, there is a critical minimum level of engagement required to allow Youth Workers to establish relationships and

trust and spreading resources too thinly may lead to no benefit rather than thinly spread benefit. Reducing resources whilst operating the current model of delivery may disproportionately reduce the impact and may not enable SBC to support young people to achieve the positive outcomes that we collectively want for them.

## **FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS**

18. We may be able to focus the youth club time and youth worker presence on fewer sites, concentrating on communities of greatest need and reducing the overall cost, whilst retaining the current model of delivery.
19. Commissioning the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to deliver services on behalf of SBC is an option as it might create economies and efficiencies through the use of volunteer resources, whilst also strengthening the VCS through our investment.
20. If we are seeking to add Youth Worker input to existing (separately funded) activities for young people, then there are possible partnerships with organisations delivering such activity. If we are looking to increase the availability of positive activities in selected communities, there are agencies we could consider commissioning to deliver such activity.
21. There are a number of public sector agencies working with children and young people across the Borough. We have spoken with potential partners including The Thirteen Group, The Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Tees Active and others. There is a willingness to work together to maximise available current resource, attract additional resources and reduce duplication.
22. In addition, there are a number of organisations that are not funded through the public purse but that could play a role in the provision of services to 11-19 year olds. Commercial leisure providers, coffee shops and entertainments businesses provide spaces in which young people already congregate and in which the commercial operators are keen to ensure the safety of all concerned whilst also pursuing their commercial objectives. These places could potentially be utilised to fulfil the role of a meeting place between youth workers and young people.
23. In light of the above we consider the following to be the options available:

**Option 1 – Current Service Model with Reduced Budgets;** cutting budgets and reducing the current service provision by reducing the sites, hours of service and Youth Work staff input. An even greater focus on deprived communities and sites may be achievable, though the sites currently used already target areas of deprivation. Reducing the service-hours risks failing to establish relationships with service users as a consequence of thinly spread/infrequent interaction.

**Option 2 – Voluntary Sector Commission;** a voluntary sector agency could deliver services (incorporating the activity and the Youth Worker input) for a reduced contribution. This could attract investment and volunteer time but would add costs for management of the contract and also retain the costs of facility and activity hire. The stability of the local voluntary sector would also be a consideration.

**Option 3 – Delivery Partnership;** A joint delivery model involving several services groups within SBC (e.g. Public Health/ Community Safety), along with external partners such as the Thirteen Group, Police and Crime Commissioners Office and the VCS. This model would introduce Youth Work input to existing activities and locations. A lead body could be designated to coordinate and manage implementation of the delivery model on behalf of the partnership. This utilises existing spaces and activities without adding costs to them, whilst focussing Youth Service resources on the advice and guidance. There is a potential loss of control over how and where youth workers are deployed and it will be harder for young people to shape the service they receive or the activities that are subsidised.

24. In **Options 2 or 3** the following characteristics would need to be enshrined in the partnership:

- All locations and activities must be safe for the young people in question
- The most deprived communities would be the focus of greatest effort and investment
- A not-for-profit ethos ensuring that all investment is targeted at young people and achieving better outcomes for young people
- Partners to have well established roots in the community
- The ability to utilise any public sector/ VCS investment as leverage to attract additional external funding
- The capability to deliver against the priorities identified by young people (Positive activities (namely sports and arts based), Advice and Guidance across a range of relevant issues and appropriate places to hang out with their friends.
- Awareness and expertise in contributing to the wider preventative agenda



25. The voluntary sector commission and the partnership delivery model have been explored in general terms. The umbrella voluntary bodies have previously indicated an interest in a commissioned role and the potential delivery partners in option 3 are supportive of the possible approach. If approved, detail work would set out the voluntary sector bodies or partner agencies and their relevant activities, contractual frameworks, performance monitoring systems, cost-benefit analysis, and implications for affected staff.
26. Consultation with target communities in the 11 – 19 age range will be required to establish their preferences for settings and activity types, and their relationships with or preconceptions about the different agencies and locations.
27. Detail analysis would also illustrate anticipated profile of the service in future in terms of geography and target communities.

## **PROCUREMENT**

28. The service value falls below EU Procurement Threshold for such services (£650,000) and as such a full tender process is not required. However, within any partnership framework or commissioned delivery, some aspects of the service could be subject to a competitive process of quotes against an agreed specification.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE**

29. Human Resources have been involved in discussions about possible future models of delivery and if Option 2 or 3 are selected, it is expected that there will be TUPE implications for the lead body and/or delivery partners.
30. The affected posts include 3 x FTE, 2 x PT and 30 sessional members of staff delivering between 5-15 hours of support per week.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

31. Each of the options is predicated on the continuation of a percentage of the current Open Access Youth Service budget, allowing the planned £250,000 per annum saving already built into the MTFP to be achieved.
32. Contractual terms around the future service model would need to balance the need to be flexible in response to further future cuts to the Council, against the desire to

provide partners or commissioned deliverers with a level of security and planning certainty that would ensure maximum possible matching investment.

## **RISKS**

33. There is a risk of objections, challenge and reputation damage associated with further reductions in youth provision.
34. There is a risk that the voluntary sector bodies or partners are not being willing to engage in a new approach, although we consider this low risk.
35. In relation to options 2 and 3 there is a risk that partners will not have sufficient relevant activity in locations that are likely to attract the communities of greatest need, or that despite the location those who might benefit most from the presence of professional youth work advice are not attracted to the activity.
36. Consideration has also been given to the risk that the in any of the options youth workers will not have sufficient contact time to generate the desired trust.
37. All of the above risks will need to inform the planning of the proposed spread of resources in future service model.

## **CONSULTATION**

38. Consultation with young people will be required to test the preferences of young people in relation to the activities and the sites they would prefer and their views on the potential partner agencies, their activities and locations to ensure they are relevant and accessible.
39. There has been consideration of the potential impact of withdrawing current activities from existing sites and whilst this is not expected to represent a threat to the viability of those sites, consultation would be required to confirm the likely impact. This consultation would extend to input from Ward Councillors in affected areas.
40. If approved by Cabinet, affected staff will be consulted on the most effective ways of focusing resources on advice and support rather than settings and activities.
41. Formal consultation will be required with affected employees when a final delivery option is approved by Cabinet. This will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

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Background Papers:

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: n/a

Property Implications: n/a