

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Thursday, 3rd December, 2009.

Present: Cllr David Harrington (Chairman), Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher (vice Cllr Lewis), Cllr Maurice Frankland, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman

Officers: Ms J.Humphreys, T.Frank, M.Mason, P.Seller (CESC); P.Diggins (DNS); G.Birtle, N.Hart (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllrs Mrs Beaumont, Cockerill, Mrs Craggs, Gibson, Lupton, Mrs McCoy, Perry

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Aggio, Mrs Apedaile, Beall, Broughton, Mrs Cains, Coleman, Cunningham, Dixon, Ms Kirby, Laing, Large, Lewis, Mrs Rigg, Rix, Smith, Stoker, Mrs Trainer, Walmsley and Mrs Walmsley.

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest declared.

2 Youth Service Review Report

Consideration was given to the outcome of an officer led EIT review of Youth Services and Youth Provision; which had been referred to this Committee as part of the consultation process following its earlier review of youth club provision. The comments of this Committee would be forwarded on when the report was to be next considered by the Executive Scrutiny Committee; and thereafter by Cabinet.

The review had been triggered by a number of factors, including:-

- the move to integrated service provision;
- the need to ensure the delivery of both targeted and universal youth services to young people;
- the funding bid for "myplace";
- the views of young people that in general terms they did not feel there was enough "things to do and places to go" within the borough;
- Government guidance on development and modernisation of services for young people, e.g. aiming high for young people, positive activities, etc.;
- the development of the Council's Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Programme.

It was noted that the local authority had a statutory duty to ensure the provision of youth services was sufficient to meet the needs of its population of young people, aged 13 to 19 and also to meet the specific needs of targeted populations in the age range 11 to 13 and 19 to 25 years old. Youth Services could be described as a range of provision developed through a partnership of the Local Authority, voluntary and community organisations, independent and private sector providers, whose activities are primarily for the personal and social development of young people.

Youth provision, for the purposes of this review, was defined as the range of provision primarily aimed at "places to go, things to do." Provision may be linked to raising achievement and standards in education, training or employment or initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion, participation and having fun.

Youth Services have traditionally been provided primarily by local authorities with the wider youth provision being a mix of local authority direct provision, commissioned services and provision through the voluntary and community sectors and independent organisations (both profit and non-profit making).

The direction of travel indicated from the Government was to increase the range and quality of positive activities for young people, which would support and enhance their development. A scrutiny review had been carried out by a Select Committee in 2006; which had identified a number of key proposals for the development of the Youth Service.

Members were provided with details of how the Youth Service activities were delivered across

integrated service areas, through a range of Youth Clubs, Community Centre provision and schools. The number of settings at present were 26, which included 3 recently developed youth cafes and mobile provision delivered through youth buses. Provision was also made via Integrated Youth Support Services that were largely targeted and made via referrals and through an identification particular risk factors. A summary of the budget position for the service was provided and further information was provided at the meeting for members to take away and digest regarding the budget profile, staffing structure, recent Ofsted inspection, and consultation feedback from young people, as well as other key documents referred to in the report considered.

Reference was also made to the issue of accessibility to the service which had been a key issue across the review. At present, the key centres of activity, such as the Billingham Forum, Splash/Culture Quarter/Central Library, Thornaby Pavilion were primarily on reasonably accessible bus routes, at least to and from the main centres of population. There was provision into the evenings and at weekends, though with some restrictions and reduced fares were offered to young people under 16 years of age with subsidised half fares for over 16. Young people, through the consultation process had raised the issue of cost of transport, which when added to the possible entry costs, or "subs" could add considerably to the overall cost of any single activity. The Council also operated 3 youth buses which provided a range of mobile provision across the borough.

It was noted that "myplace" would provide the central hub for the delivery of a wide range of facilities and be versatile to allow new ideas of services to evolve over the lifetime of the project. "myplace" would also become the delivery location for many agencies and partners involved in the delivery of key services to and for young people, including voluntary, statutory, public and private providers, with six key partners having already been identified. A revenue cost of approximately £277k had been identified to deliver "myplace" as the funding received from DCSF was only for the capital development of the project. The revenue costs would need to be identified by autumn 2011.

The Committee was presented with options for the future delivery of local authority youth services based on their proposed configuration around the development of a 'hub and spoke' model, with "myplace" being the potential hub, and the remaining service delivered within integrated service areas, ensuring reasonable local accessibility and provision across the whole borough. This included the proposed reduction of the number of settings (spokes) used for delivery of the service, so as to allow an increase in the number of activities/sessions delivered within a lesser number of settings.

Members expressed a number of concerns, summarised below, which they requested be noted and referred to the attention of the Executive Scrutiny Committee when they were to be presented with the outcome of this review:-

- the suggested staffing costs appeared excessive and required further explanation;
- there was no reference within the proposed rationalisation of buildings to either their identity, or the staffing implications;
- the report contained no identification of financial savings and highlighted the need for revenue funding to be identified for "myplace" but did not include any examination of the possibility of obtaining ERDF funding via the 3rd sector;
- the current transport provision was inadequate, which offered little assurance that future the proposed 'hub and spoke' model of delivery could be satisfactorily catered for;
- Councillor Mrs Fletcher requested a written response to clarify the extent of the Council's Youth Bus Service provision within her own ward;
- concern was expressed that the proposed linkage of provision for Yarm within the areas of Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby were not co-terminous with the Area Partnership arrangements;
- the review recommendations failed to address the need for information, advice and guidance highlighted by the young people consulted;
- it was questioned whether young people themselves would be involved in deciding which youth provision settings would be ceased, and whether young people would have a voice when youth service matters such as the youth cafe provision were discussed by the LSP;
- there appeared to be little reference made to the VCS review previously carried out which examined the management arrangements of community buildings;
- clarification was required as to the role of BSF schools as community hubs, and how organisations such as scouts, cadets etc linked to the proposals.

CONCLUDED that the concerns identified by this Committee be noted and be referred to the attention of the Executive Scrutiny Committee.