

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 JULY 2009
REPORT OF FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW STEERING GROUP
ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the key findings and recommendations of the Fundamental Review Steering Group following its study into activities for teenagers.

2. Membership of the Steering Group

- 2.1 The Steering Group comprised: -

Members

Councillor J. D. Bernard
Councillor R. Jones
Councillor M. J. Holder
Councillor D. M. Easton
Councillor D. Thomas
Councillor W. Yates

External Representatives:

Inspector Maurice Annett – Staffordshire Police, Chase Division
Michelle Williams – Staffordshire Youth Service
Kevin Phillips – Promoting Positive Activities for Young People Project
Pupils from Kingsmead Technology College
Representatives from VOICE
Cannock Chase Schools Council

Officers:

Tony McGovern Corporate Director
Mike Edmonds – Head of Leisure and Major Projects
Adrienne Whitehouse – Leisure Development Manager

- 2.2 The Steering Group would like to express its thanks to all those who have so readily agreed to take part in the review.

3. Review Methodology

3.1 There were three distinct stages of the review: -

Stage 1 – Agreeing the scope and terms of reference of the review

Stage 2 – Baseline assessment and evidence gathering. This stage covered the collection and collation of available background evidence to assess the current position. This included a mail out questionnaire, speaking to partners, other service providers and meeting with young people to discuss their aspirations for the provision of future activities and engagement and involvement with young people.

Stage 3 – This stage involved investigating and analysing the key findings from the study, evaluating the options available, developing improvements and agreeing recommendations for change.

4. Stage 1 – Scope and Terms of Reference

4.1 At the initial meeting, the Steering Group considered the Minute¹ of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26 June 2008 which determined the review should look at: -

“the effectiveness and success of current activities for teenagers in the District in reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour and levels of crime committed by young people”

4.2 Early on in its discussions the Steering Group discovered that there was very little accessible evidence available to map existing activities or to map the correlation between those activities and reductions in anti-social behaviour or the levels of crime committed by young people. Consequently, achieving the outcome identified by Scrutiny Committee was not possible.

4.3 After giving careful consideration to this request, the Steering Group agreed that it would be more positive to focus on the activities that were currently available within the district for young people, to speak to young people and ascertain what type of activities they would like to see and to look at how information in respect of activities for teenagers is communicated to them.

4.4 Members also agreed that the review should focus on young people aged between 13 and 19, but should not exclude information obtained from other groups.

5. Stage 2 – Baseline assessment and evidence gathering

5.1 The review identified that there was no one place that teenagers or young people could go to obtain a list of activities for teenagers in the district. Whilst different departments within the authority held some information there was no comprehensive list of activities for teenagers.

Questionnaire

5.2 In order to identify what facilities, services and organisations existed within the District, Members agreed to issue a questionnaire to obtain as much information as possible. This questionnaire targeted providers of activities for young people within the 13-19 age group but did not exclude information relating to activities for other age groups, if forthcoming.

¹ Minute 11b Scrutiny Committee 26 June 2008

- 5.3 All direct service providers identified by the Children's Trust Board were contacted and requested to provide information on their offer for young people. The following information was requested from each:
- a. Name of Organisation
 - b. Types of Activity provided and available
 - c. Whether the activity was (or was not) a specified Diversionary Activity with the primary aim of reducing anti social behaviour
 - d. Duration, how many hours or weeks the sessions lasted
 - e. Age groups eligible to participate
 - f. Locations available by wards
 - g. Total Participants
 - h. Cost to participants/ organisers
 - l. How the activities are funded
 - j. Evidence of Success
 - k. How the services were communicated to, and accessed by, users
- 5.4 Responses were received from a number of organisations including:
- Crazy Saints Youth Club
 - Primary Care Trust (school nurses)
 - Staffordshire County Council Teenage Pregnancy
 - Rugeley C&LP
 - Cannock Chase Council Leisure Development/Community Recreation/Play /Operations
 - Staffordshire Youth Service (Positive Activities for Young People Audit) numerous respondents
 - Hednesford Town Football Club
- 5.5 The resulting feedback from the above organisations identified 119 opportunities for involvement in activities across the Cannock Chase District. These included venues/services offering multiple activities across three sectors:
- Public - 99 (61 Positive Activities for Young People; 29 CCDC Culture and & Leisure; 9 other)
 - Private - 2
 - Voluntary -18
- 5.6 The Steering Group acknowledged that the audit only revealed a "snapshot" of activities available at that current time or planned for the immediate future and that it would become out of date very quickly.

- 5.7 A number of problems were encountered during the information gathering process ranging from the lack of responses and the numbers of times repeat requests for information had to be made, to the way in which other organisations gathered information. Not all organisations provided answers to all of the questions.
- 5.8 Many organisations do not provide diversionary activities as a primary objective, so activities are not mapped or tracked and therefore cannot show a correlation of activity to a reduction in antisocial behaviour.
- 5.9 Similarly, not all agencies collect information on the effectiveness of their activities in contributing to reducing antisocial behaviour, and so have no way of knowing whether they have been successful.
- 5.10 Little or no information showing a correlation of activities with a reduction in anti-social behaviour was available. At the time of the audit, incidents ranging from domestic violence to nuisance neighbours fell under the banner of anti-social behaviour. Whilst the total number of incidents were recorded by the police, they did not categorise those attributed solely to young people.
- 5.11 In summary the exercise revealed that:
- A wide range of activities existed providing a wide range of opportunities, which were communicated through a range of media, although not always the media most relevant to young people.
 - Agencies' information collection methods were often incompatible and "ad hoc" (due to differing priorities), no baseline information existed, and there was an inability to identify trends – reduction, cessation or displacement
 - There were insufficient resources available to be able to provide the Steering Group with the information they required: the County Observatory has limited resources for each district – not priority work. Crime Analysts were mapping Acute and Persistent Crime but not specifically young people's antisocial behaviour. Police Intelligence Analysts only mapping tactical responses, criminals, releases, crimes and arrests.
 - There was a lack of resources specifically around the IT – GIS systems, software, skills etc.needed to map and analyse information gathered.

Staffordshire Police – Chase Division – Inspector Maurice Annett

- 5.12 As part of its review Members of the Steering Group received a presentation from Inspector Maurice Annett who explained that 15 Youth Police Community Support Officers (YPCSOs) would be appointed for the Chase Division, with 6 working full-time. Part of their role would be to engage with young people to ascertain their needs and to visit schools to assist teachers at break times and make checks on those not attending.
- 5.13 Locally the Police had also set up a Matrix Team to tackle anti-social behaviour particularly linked to alcohol related crime.

- 5.14 It was also pointed out that although some data was available with regards to mapping anti-social behaviour there were inadequate resources (human and financial) available to produce any meaningful data during the period of the review or in the near future.

Staffordshire Youth Service and VOICE – Michelle Williams

- 5.15 Michelle Williams from Staffordshire Youth Service attended one of the Steering Groups meetings and explained that detached Youth Workers and Police Community Support Officers were working together to tackle anti-social behaviour and to provide reassurance to the community.
- 5.16 Members were informed that VOICE had been established in 2000 and plays an important role across Cannock Chase. It allows young people to participate in the decision-making process and to have input into what should be provided for them locally. Representatives of VOICE form the Shadow Children's Trust Board for Cannock Chase and have met with the Children's Trust Board and other organisations in order to represent young people's ideas and views.
- 5.17 The Steering Group were also advised that representatives of VOICE were to attend the Children's Trust Board Conference in March 2009 and were to tour high schools and youth centres in order to raise awareness and increase their membership.
- 5.18 VOICE are also in the process of establishing a website providing information on where activities are taking place locally and also manage the Youth Bank Youth Opportunities Fund which is used to provide funding to support the provision of activities for young people.

Positive Activities for Young People – Kevin Phillips

- 5.19 Mr. Kevin Phillips informed the Steering Group of his involvement, as part of the Positive Activities for Young People Project, to deliver a County wide website to provide information on activities and facilities for young people. The project is a partnership project, funded by the Staffordshire Youth Service and aims to provide a "one stop" shop for young people seeking information on available activities. It was acknowledged that the website needed to contain comprehensive, accurate, accessible, up to date information that included details on locations, travel information, age ranges, disabled access, costs, concessions and any accreditations as well as including links to adjoining local authority sites.
- 5.20 It was anticipated that the website would be ready for testing in May 2009 and launched in September 2009.
- 5.21 The Steering Group were also informed about the Pass to Health Initiative operating in Biddulph. This project, which involves issuing pupils with a swipe card, is aimed at encouraging them to take part in health related activities. Pupils swipe their cards at terminals in the schools to gain points when they take part in before lunchtime and after school clubs, eat healthy meals, represent the school in competitions, lead and run activities, walk or bike to school or take part in community sports or activity clubs. These points are then totalled up at regular intervals and pupils use them to receive awards such as sports equipment, activity vouchers at the local leisure centre, certificates and badges, tickets to sport matches and activity days out.

Representatives from VOICE and Kingsmead Technology College

- 5.22 Michelle Williams from Staffordshire Youth Service and representatives from VOICE together with Amanda Holmes and a group of 'A' Level Students from Kingsmead Technology College attended a Steering Group meeting to share their views and thoughts with Members on anti-social behaviour, what it is, what activities are available for teenagers, what activities are needed for teenagers and the best ways of letting them know about activities available in the district.
- 5.23 At the meeting those present split into two groups one made up of young people and the other of Members to list what they considered to be anti-social behaviour. Interestingly both groups listed similar issues including: -
- Graffiti
 - Bad language
 - Big groups congregating
 - Girl/Boy car racers
 - Damage to property
 - Chewing Gum
 - Under age alcohol drinking
 - Littering
 - Fireworks being thrown
 - Dog fouling
 - Noise
- 5.24 The young people informed the panel that they considered that older people might be prejudiced against groups who meet together in public places. Most students did not realise that older people felt intimidated by them when they met in groups with their friends.
- 5.25 The Steering Group received a presentation from the students attending Kingsmead Technology College entitled "Not All Youths Are Lawbreakers". This highlighted the positive contributions made by young people and also pointed out that out of 205 Anti-social behaviour orders issued in Staffordshire in 2006; only 16 were given to youths.
- 5.26 The Steering Group listened to the views of the young people present. They considered that teenagers took part in anti-social behaviour because there was nothing for them to do. Activities provided were mainly sport based and not all young people wanted to take part in such activities. The students informed the Steering Group that they would like a cinema or ten pin bowling alley, although it was recognised that costs and transport issues may exclude some young people.
- 5.27 The students said they would also like a "drop in" centre to be provided where they could meet friends in an unstructured and unsupervised way. They did not always wish to go back to school to take part in after school clubs or activities.

- 5.28 Young people feel their actions are sometimes misunderstood and that they are all judged because of the poor behaviour of a few. The students considered that the local press normally only publish negative issues about teenagers and young people.
- 5.29 The students also indicated that they generally found out about events and activities by word of mouth. They had seen the Council's website but considered it boring and old fashioned; they would prefer to have a link to a site for young people. It was considered that school computer message screens would be a useful way to disseminate information about forthcoming activities and events.
- 5.30 Michelle Williams informed the Steering Group that the Staffordshire Youth Service would be sharing a new mobile unit with Lichfield District Council. This unit could possible show DVDs and provide a space for young people to use particularly in areas where transport issues were a problem.
- 5.31 In answer to the problem of boy/girl car racers the students suggested that organised motor vehicle events/meetings could be arranged as a possible solution.

Cannock Chase Schools Council

- 5.32 As part of the review the Leisure Development Manager attended a meeting of the Cannock Chase Schools Council to seek their views on ant-social behaviour. The Schools Council is made up of teachers and pupils from: -
- Kingmead Technology College
 - Blake Valley Technology College
 - Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School
 - Fair Oak Business and Enterprise College
 - Hagley Park Sports College
 - Norton Canes High School
- 5.33 Generally the findings from this discussion with pupils were very similar to those pointed out to members at their earlier Steering Group meeting with representatives from VOICE and Kingsmead Technology College. The pupils explained that they sometimes meet in groups after school and that adults could perceive this as anti-social behaviour, even though they were not causing any problems.
- 5.34 The free swimming initiative was welcomed, although it was acknowledged that not all pupils wanted to take part in sports and some would rather be involved in art activities, theatre trips and visits to theme parks etc.
- 5.35 Barriers to participation related to costs, lack of transport and the distance to attractions and also a lack of awareness of what activities were available. The pupils explained that the number of school buses and public transport had been reduced and it was suggested that a "youth train" (i.e. a circular bus service linking youth venues) could be a possible solution.

- 5.36 Pupils also highlighted that they would prefer to use a “non-institutionalised” building in which they could “chill out”, possibly a disused public house, at which non-alcoholic drinks could be available.
- 5.37 The pupils considered the best way to communicate with them was through Facebook, texting, word of mouth, through the schools IT systems and leaflets and posters. They disliked the Council’s website considering it to be boring and unimaginative.

6 **Stage 3 - Key Findings**

- 6.1 There is little understanding of activities on offer and there is very little accessible evidence available to map existing activities or to map the correlation between those activities and reductions in anti-social behaviour or the levels of crime committed by young people. This was due to lack of evidence and of human and financial resources.
- 6.2 There is, currently, no one place that young people can go to obtain a list of youth facilities or activities in the District. Whilst different departments and organizations/partners held some information there was no comprehensive list covering activities for teenagers.
- 6.3 The Positive Activities for Young People Project is in the process of compiling a County wide database of activities for young people. It is due to be launched in September 2009.
- 6.4 The Council and many other local agencies provide or commission some good activities but there is little evidence of a comprehensive/coordinated area based approach. This approach can result in a duplication of effort and a waste of scarce resources. Anti-social behaviour must be tackled as part of an agency wide response that must also look into other problems such as drug and alcohol abuse.
- 6.5 A general lack of data exists on activities, cost and performance. Agencies’ information collection methods are incompatible and “ad hoc” (due to differing priorities), no or little baseline information exists and there is little evidence as to the success of projects and initiatives.
- 6.6 Young people are not always consulted by agencies when they are planning new activities. Simply investing in activities will not solve the problem, as young people will only make use of activities that are age related (relevant), accessible, reliable, unstructured and free or low cost. Young people indicated that they are not always keen on organized activities, preferring an element of spontaneity in their socialising. Consulting young people before deciding on new provision will increase the chance of their long-term involvement and participation.
- 6.7 Cost is a key determinant of accessibility. Charges can be a barrier and either prevent attendance or lead to sporadic attendance to activities and events.
- 6.8 Communication is key to all community engagement and this is true in terms of young people. In discussions with young people it was clear that they are not always aware of all the activities available in their area. It was pointed out that even young people with internet access may not think about looking on the Council’s website. It was not considered attractive to them. Communications need to highlight that activities will be smart and fun, rather than that they have educational worth. Word of mouth and schools were considered useful forums for disseminating information, particularly through school web message facilities or alternative web-based communications such as “facebook”. Text messages and using internet enabled

telephones was also a popular method of communication. It is important that any web pages are designed in an accessible, attractive and interesting way.

- 6.9 For young people hanging around is a chosen activity with only a small minority thinking it is anti-social. It makes them feel independent and is an opportunity to socialise with friends that is free, unstructured and unsupervised by adults. A "chill out" building was considered the ideal type of venue.
- 6.10 Young people want activities to be available in their local area. Mobile provision such as the Youth Services Vehicle and mobile film companies may provide useful activities for teenagers, particularly if transport is an issue or a barrier to access.
- 6.11 There is uncertainty around funding resulting in little security for projects etc.
- 6.12 The Steering Group at its final meeting considered the key findings and options available in order to determine a number of recommendations for improvement. One of the key issues was how to ensure that any recommendations proposed would be implemented, co-ordinated with partners, monitored and reviewed and a dialogue with young people maintained after the review was completed. The Children's Trust Board (CTB) in its role of improving outcomes for children and young people by bringing services together seemed the ideal vehicle to take any recommendations forward. The Children's Trust Board involves all relevant partners and therefore can address one of the key findings arising out of this review, the need to ensure a co-ordinated and area based approach is adopted in order to provide activities for teenagers and tackle anti-social behaviour.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:
- 7.2 it supports the Positive Activities For Young People Project by ensuring that any services involved with providing facilities or activities for young people submit information to enable the County wide website to be developed.
- 7.3 appropriate resources are made available through the Delivering Change process to enable the Council's PR& Marketing team to work with young people to develop imaginative, accessible and attractive webpage(s) for young people on its own website. This should provide links to the County wide website and other information and advice sites that are of interest to young people.
- 7.3 the Children's Trust Board is requested to:-
 - (a) Co-ordinate an area based approach to address the key findings in this report, by:-
 - a. engaging with all relevant partners responsible for the delivery of positive activities for teenagers and young people,
 - b. in the medium term and in conjunction with the Crime and Reduction Partnership, explore with partners, the options available and resources required (human and financial) for identifying the correlation between those activities and reductions in anti-social behaviour or the levels of crime committed by young people

- c. developing activities that are accessible, reliable and relevant to young people by consulting with them when planning and designing new activities or events (consideration should also be given to mobile provision and taking activities into local areas)
- d. agreeing with partners a standard approach by which to monitor and evaluate activities so that evidence based judgments (around cost, performance, effectiveness and whether the activities meet the needs and demands of young people) can be made when considering new or repeat activities and projects
- e. establishing with partners and Members adequate funding for projects and schemes so as to provide some certainty and reliability around activities and events designed to reduce anti-social behaviour
- f. developing with partners effective and relevant ways of telling young people about activities and events in their area, including:-
 - i. co-ordinating the development of the Positive Activities for Young Peoples web-site
 - ii. exploring the opportunity to use the Schools message pages subject to adequate budgets or funding
 - iii. making more creative use of technology by using Facebook and texting subject to adequate budgets or funding

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Section 1

Background

When considering the work programme for 2008-09 Members of the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 26 June 2008, resolved that an appropriate issue to review would be *“the effectiveness and success of current activities for teenagers in the District in reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour and levels of crime committed by young people”*

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

Contained within the main body of this report.

Section 3

Contributions to CHASE

Providing worthwhile, meaningful and relevant activities for children, young people and teenagers contributes to achieving the Council's priorities particularly around safer and stronger communities and culture, sport and services for children. Positive activities and sport and leisure pursuits can offer young people an alternative to anti-social behaviour as well as encouraging healthier, active and more enriched lifestyles, by increasing self-esteem and self-confidence.

Section 4

Section 17 Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of Section 17 arising from this report.

Section 5

Human Rights Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Human Rights Act 1998 arising from this report.

Section 6

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act.

Section 7

Risk Management Implications

There are no identified Risk Management implications directly associated with this report.

Section 8

Legal Implications

There are no identified legal implications directly associated with this report.

Section 9

Financial Implications

The Children's Trust Board has a Supplies and Services budget of £4,900 for 2009-10. However, this is mainly committed and no specific provision exists in Council budgets to fund any of the services required to develop and maintain the web site for young people. Any expenditure would have to be met by compensatory savings, approved external funding or through future Delivering change budget processes.

Section 10

Human Resource Implications

There are no identified human resource implications arising from this report.

Section 11

Equality and Diversity Implications

Any activities and events provided should meet the needs of all young people in the community.

Background Papers

Tired of Hanging Around – Audit Commission Report January 2009

Annexes