

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 2nd March, 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Simon Hill, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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**6. TASK AND FINISH PANEL ON EXTERNALLY FUNDED LEISURE SERVICES AND
YOUTH PROVISION (Pages 3 - 8)**

(Head of Leisure Services). To consider the attached report.

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Report to Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 2 March 2006

Subject: Report of the Task and Finish Panel on Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision – Final Report



Officer contact for further information: Derek Macnab – Head of Leisure Services Ext: 4260

Committee Secretary: Z Folley (ext: 4532)

Recommendations/Decisions required:

- **Youth Provision in the District**
 - (1) **To note the work undertaken on youth provision in the District to ascertain future needs and to determine how these can be best met by the various agencies involved in service delivery and;**
 - (2) **That the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be asked to consider making provision in the Grant Aid Budget for the District Council to remain an active partner in the provision of voluntary sector/joint funded Youth initiatives through the offer of professional advise and;**
 - **External Funding for Leisure and Cultural Projects**
 - (3) **To note the request that the Head of Leisure Services submit a report to the Cabinet for the enhancement of youth provision during 2006/07 including a request for a supplementary estimate**
 - **Review Completion**
 - (4) **To note the completion of the Panel's terms of reference as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report.**
 - **Requests for future Scrutiny Reviews**
 - (5) **To note the topics identified for future scrutiny review and need for them to be submitted for inclusion in the 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan.**

Background

- 1.1 At the May 2005 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a Task and Finish Panel was established chaired by Cllr Mrs A Grigg to consider Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision. The Panel adopted the following Terms of Reference:
 - i) To review current provision for young people in the District, seeking to identify future needs and how these can best be met by the various Agencies involved in the delivery of Young People's Services.
 - ii) To recommend arrangements for the monitoring of the Performance of the Council's Leisure Management Contract, to ensure that the Council's Key Objectives are being met.

- iii) To review the District Council's success in accessing External Funding for the provision of Leisure and Cultural Opportunities, in order to maximise future benefit and highlight any good practice.

Youth Provision In The District

2. At the initial meeting of the Panel, Members were advised that work with Young People in the District is currently undertaken on a multi-agency basis, not only by the Statutory Providers, but also by Leisure Services, Town and Parish Council and numerous Voluntary Sector Agencies. This was in addition to the range of opportunities provided by the private and commercial sectors.
3. Members considered that a review of Youth Provision could lead to a better understanding of priorities, improved communication, avoidance of duplication and identification of gaps in provision. Critically, it would also assist the Council in determining what role, if any, it wishes to undertake with respect to Young People's issues in the future. It was felt that this could influence the work of the Council's Young Person's Officer Post, which the Panel were informed had been vacant at this time for several months.
4. A number of Members of the Panel were current or previous representatives on the main –co-ordinating forum for Young People's issues in the District i.e. the "Epping Forest Locality Youth Strategy Group". As such, they were aware of potential changes in focus being driven by Central Government, regarding youth work and in particular the Connexions Service. It was therefore felt that it would be premature to recommend any local actions in isolation.
5. In order to seek clarity on these issues, the Panel agreed that it would be useful to have an Elected Member, with responsibility for young people, from the County Council, along to a future Panel meeting to ascertain how the County intended to respond.
6. The Panel recalled how in the past, Youth Clubs had been run at the majority of Senior Schools, utilising the skills of community volunteers. This service had declined through lack of resources, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers and the Local Management of Schools. The Panel concluded that this was unlikely to be re-established.
7. Again, at our meeting the Head of Leisure Services gave a presentation on Youth issues in the District. This detailed the main issues of concern identified by young people locally i.e. Transportation, Employment, ASBO's and Dispersal Orders, Leisure and Entertainment and lack of Local Facilities. Concerns about Young People in relation to Under Achievement at Schools, Drug and Alcohol abuse, Anti-Social Behaviour and Teenage Pregnancy/Sexual Health were also covered. An overview of current statutory responsibilities as well as an insight into the voluntary sector was given. The work of NACRO was also explained.
8. In conclusion Members felt it was important, that not only did they have the opportunity to visit some of the youth projects in the District, but also to hear directly from Young People.

Visits to Voluntary Sector/Joint Funded Youth Provision.

9. In September 2005 the Panel visited the Waltham Abbey Young Persons Information Centre at 38 Sun Street, where an Open Evening was being held. This allowed a useful insight into the work of the project to be gained. Members were given a tour of the facilities, which are a conversion of a shop premises. It was explained how WAYPIC's aim according to their Mission Statement, was *"To provide a discrete service of advice, information, advocacy and counselling that supports and empowers*

the young people of Waltham Abbey and the surrounding areas to have the opportunity to take control of their lives and to recognise their responsibilities to themselves and to the community”

10. WAYPIC is a Charitable Company limited by Guarantee, which operates on a Multi-Agency Partnership basis. The Partners included but not exclusively, are Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council Youth Services, Epping Forest Primary Care Trust, Epping Forest Voluntary Action, Essex Young People's Drug and Alcohol Awareness Services, Connexions Service, Citizens Advice, Young Concern Trust and local residents and businesses.
11. The Centre provides a safe and supportive environment staffed by trained specialists, who address young people's issues and co-ordinate service delivery. Many positive impacts are being made, with particular success in relation to teenage pregnancy and sexual health issues.
12. The Panel then transferred to Waltham Abbey Youth 2000, which is located in the Booker Road Industrial Estate, again in Waltham Abbey. The Panel were greeted by David Stone, Essex County Council Youth Services Locality Manager for the District who showed the Panel around. WAY2000 had acquired the freehold of the building with the assistance of a National Lottery Grant, but had subsequently disposed of the rear part of the premises, which was no longer required for the Motor Project.
13. The Panel were advised that the Project, which is again a Charity with a number of partner agencies, was open on three nights per week and attended regularly by a group of up to 30 young people. These young people tended to be towards the older age group, 15 – 18 years, largely because of the isolated position of the building. Facilities are provided for these young people on a drop-in basis to use computers, art and craft resources and a traditional pool table etc.
14. In addition to the Drop In Service, the building also provided accommodation for the Prince's Trust/learning Skills project. This scheme had relocated with the withdrawal of the Youth Services from the Roding Centre Buckhurst Hill. Whilst it had continued to be well attended, Members raised concerns about its accessibility, particularly by public transport.
15. The Locality Manager went on to highlight other Youth Work across the District and in particular progress on the new Youth Centre at Loughton. Members were concerned that whilst there may be some growth in the local youth service budget after 2 years of standstill, there was no direct new revenue allocation to meet the running costs of the new Loughton Youth Centre. This would inevitably impact on Youth Work elsewhere in the District.
16. In October, a number of Members of the Panel paid an informal visit to "The Box" a voluntary run and funded 'Drop In' facility located in Epping High Street. The young People in attendance enjoyed and appreciated the facilities, on offer but would have liked longer opening hours. Concerns were expressed by the organisation, that there was a likelihood of their Lease not being renewed and they may have to re-locate to other premises.
17. Before the Task and Finish Panel formally convened in November the Group visited the new Ongar Youth Centre. This was to enable Members to view the facilities and importantly to gain an insight into the work of Youth Plus. Youth Plus is a Voluntary Sector Youth Club which has an active membership of young people, many of whom have special needs. The Club is run on a fully integrated basis and is operated with support, largely by the young people themselves.
18. The Club offers a range of Arts and Craft Activities, Sports, Social Outings, Excursions and produces Small Performance Pieces. At the time of the visit,

preparations were being made and rehearsals held, for a Christmas Show. Staff from the Council's Partnership Project with NACRO, "The Epping Forest Community Sports Programme", were also in attendance organising sports activities on the outside areas. On the evening, Members had the opportunity to speak with a number of the young people attending, who obviously enjoyed the club and were proud to be associated with Youth Plus.

19. It was noted that despite some dialogue, the Club had not approach the District Council, unlike most of the other Voluntary Youth Clubs for financial support. This appeared to be either through a desire to remain independent and/or lack of time to complete the Grant Application Form.

Conclusion

20. Throughout their review period the Panel had visited a number of Voluntary Run Youth Clubs. The important role they play with respect not only in offering opportunities for young people in areas not generally served by the Youth Service, but also in terms of Voluntary Service of the Community helpers, was acknowledged.
21. The Panel felt that the District Council should be active partners in supporting such clubs through the offer of professional advice and through the Grant Aid process. It was felt that 3 year funding agreements were probably appropriate to provide stability and that funding could be linked to specific outcomes. It was agreed that the views of the panel should be reported through O & S to the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder who is responsible for Grant Aid.

Government Green Paper – Youth Matters

22. At the Panel's September 2005 meeting, the potential changes to the nature of Youth Provision, being promoted by Central Government were highlighted. Nigel Varman, Divisional Youth Work Manager, West Essex attended the meeting to talk about the County Council's response to the Governments Green Paper "Youth Matters".
23. Nigel circulated a copy of a presentation, which was being used by Essex to inform Members, Officers and Volunteers about "Youth Matters". However, Nigel stressed that the release of the Green Paper had been considerably delayed and as the County Council had not received sight of the document until mid August, they had yet to formally consider and respond. However, the implementation Timetable is very tight, with most changes sought and funding available from April 2006.
24. Subsequently, the Panel were forwarded a copy of the County Council's response to Youth Matters. It was clear that the County Council shared the view of the Task and Finish Panel that the proposed "Opportunity Cards", which offer discounted access for entertainment and leisure facilities, would be impractical and expensive, and not be an effective deterrent with respect to anti-social behaviour. Some Members of the Panel still expressed disappointment that more could not be done by Youth Services and Education, to provide Youth Clubs in Secondary Schools. Whilst it was recognised that funding was an issue, some Members felt this traditional type of provision had as much merit as the modern trend for "Drop In" and Information based schemes.

Future of Young Persons Officer Post

25. The Panel has proposed a Draft Job Description including a request to develop an Audit of Youth Opportunities in the District. The appointment of a Young Persons Officer's Post was considered by the Cabinet on the 6th February, 2006 as part of the Leisure Services Interim Restructuring Report, post externalisation of the Management of the Leisure Centres. It is hoped to advertise the post at the start of the new financial year 2006/07.

Monitoring Arrangements For The Leisure Management Contract

26. The Task and Finish Panel recommended Contract Monitoring arrangements for the Leisure Management Contract at its meeting in October 2005. These were subsequently agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2005 and confirmed by Cabinet.

External Funding For Leisure And Cultural Projects

27. The Panel were aware that in recent years Leisure Services has enjoyed success in attracting external funding to support the delivery of Local Leisure and Cultural opportunities. Much of the funding being based on the establishment of effective working relationships and partnering projects with other Agencies.
28. At the January meeting of the Panel, the Head of Leisure Services presented a paper, which broke down the sources of the £2.8 million of external income secured by Leisure Services in the last 5 years. Detail was also provided about the type of projects it was used to deliver. An insight was given as to what the main features are of a successful application. An overview of the current resources of the Council to identify, develop and submit Funding Bids was also explained. The Panel considered future options such as the re-appointment of an External Funding Officer and how to share best practice to the wider community.
29. The Panel also considered a proposal by the Leader of Council to provide £50,000 of additional funding, as part of next year's Budget to enhance youth provision. It was felt that there was insufficient time to make a fully considered response, before the Budget was set. It was agreed that the Head of Leisure Services would develop some options for consideration as a supplementary estimate, in the new financial year.
30. The Panel were impressed by the level of external funding achieved by Leisure Services and whilst they did not consider it necessary to re-appoint an External Funding Officer, felt that an internal cross-service co-ordinating group may have merit. The Head of Leisure Services Paper to be included in the Members Bulletin and advice to be made available at any forthcoming Community Forums.

Completion of Terms of Reference and Work Programme.

31. The Panel concluded its terms of reference at their last meeting on the 25 January 2006 and as a result has been disbanded.
32. A number of potential topics for future reviews were highlighted by the Panel to include a review of Arts Development and Community/Major Events and possibly future Management Arrangements at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre. It is noted that these requests will need to be submitted for inclusion in next years OS work plan to determine how they should be dealt with.

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