

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Review Task and Finish Panel



Date of meeting: 20 April 2015

Subject: Youth Engagement Review – Scoping and Terms of Reference

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To consider the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review of Youth Engagement in the district;**
- (2) To agree timescales for the review as set out in this report; and**
- (3) To discuss options for undertaking the review, specifically;**
 - **times / frequency of meetings of the Panel;**
 - **information required by officers/members;**
 - **issues to be covered by the review, including current resources allocated to youth engagement; and**
 - **proposals for consultation.**

Report:

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 10 February 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel to review the use of the Council's current budget relating to youth engagement, from 2016/17.
2. As part of the budget savings exercise in 2014, officers were asked to provide a report to a future meeting of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee on the most effective use of the budget relating to youth engagement from 2016/17.
3. In response to this request, the Leisure and Community Services Portfolio Holder submitted a proposal to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee seeking agreement to the establishment of a Task & Finish Review Panel, to undertake a review of potential options for the best use of the existing budgets for youth engagement for the future.
4. This report sets out the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review.

Background Information:

5. Officers were initially asked to produce a Business Case as part of the savings exercise, based on the Epping Forest Youth Council ceasing operation as from April 2016, coinciding with the end of the current Youth Councillors' Term of Office.
6. When this proposal was originally presented to Finance Cabinet Sub Committee, it was understood that the cost of providing the Youth Council was in the region of £125,000.

However, this budget allocation is in fact for 'Youth Strategy', which covers a very wide portfolio of work, as well as the Youth Council, and additionally includes a range of central, support service costs.

7. The actual operating costs of the Youth Council amount to c£54,000 per annum, which includes the salaries of the Young Persons Officer (full time including oncosts) and Young Persons Assistant (part time 18 hrs per week plus oncosts) and a project budget of £12,000. (NB. The £12k project budget covers the cost of Youth Councillors travel and training and specific projects which are generated through the annual Youth Conference/consultation events with young people).

8. The Youth Council currently consists of 21 young people aged between 13 and 18 years, representing local secondary schools and Epping Forest College, plus young people who live in the district but go to school outside of the area and a representative from the Home Educated sector. These young people represent the views of their peers and wider school communities and each has attained their positions on the Council, via a comprehensive Election process within the establishment that they represent. The Youth Council also works with a range of community groups across the district which include children, young people and older people.

9. In addition to this particular aspect of youth engagement, the Council's Community Services provides a range of activities, projects and programmes with young people across the district, including sports, dance, drama, diversionary activities in key areas and targeted work in the community and in schools. The majority of this work is funded through external funding secured through competitive processes.

10. Youth engagement is seen as a priority for a range of public and voluntary sector agencies, including the Police (and Crime Commissioner), Essex County Council, Health Services and range of voluntary organisations. This is not only to ensure that young people have access to core services that are provided, but to enable them to be involved in the design and delivery of these.

11. It also provides the opportunity for agencies to build positive relationships with young people and promote good health and wellbeing, in order to help reduce or prevent issues of risky behaviours, such as alcohol and drug abuse, poor sexual health and anti-social behaviour.

12. However, several key partners have faced major budget reductions over the last 3 -5 years and the most significant of these, at Essex County Council, has seen major cutbacks in the provision of Youth Services, resulting in complete withdrawal of 'face to face' Youth Service delivery work across Essex.

13. This Task and Finish Review Panel has therefore been established to undertake a review of youth engagement by the Council, to determine the best use of existing resources.

Aims and Objectives:

14. The proposed terms of reference for the Task and Finish Panel are set out at Appendix

1 to this report. It is proposed that the review be managed as follows:

(a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by November 2015;

(b) To include two representatives from the District Youth Council on the Task and Finish Panel;

(c) To determine the impact of the Council's current engagement with young people, through consultation with local statutory and voluntary sector partners, and,

(d) To determine the best use of the allocated funding for the future.

15. In order to meet with the budget setting process for 2016/17, this review will need to be completed by October 2015, to allow time for the final report to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Committee, with a view to implementation in 2016/17.

Recommendations:

16. The panel is asked to:

- (a) agree the scope and terms of reference for the review;
- (b) agree the timescales for the review; and
- (c) discuss options for undertaking the review.