Title of Report: Scrutiny review into the facilities available for young people

Report to be considered by: Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Date of Meeting: 17 April 2012

Purpose of Report: To outline the results of the investigation into the facilities available for young people in the District.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission endorses the recommendations of the Task Group for the consideration of the Executive.

Task Group Chairman

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Executive Report

1. Introduction

1.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) meeting of 2 August 2011, the Acting Head of Youth Services and Commissioning (Julia Waldman) provided an update on the activities available within the district for teenagers. This update was the latest in a string following a scrutiny review of the subject carried out between October 2008 and March 2009.

1.2 It was resolved at the meeting that Julia Waldman would provide a report back to the Commission at its meeting of 1 November, and a meeting was held on 16 August between the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Mrs Waldman and scrutiny support officers to scope the contents of the report.

1.3 During the course of the meeting however it became clear that more value might be added to the public understanding of the issue if a fuller task group review were to be conducted. The Commission subsequently agreed to the set up of a cross-party task group review.

1.4 This report provides the findings and recommendations arising from the review and provides detail on its Terms of Reference and methodology.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The Terms of Reference for the task group were to conduct a review into the facilities available for young people in West Berkshire and, in particular:

- Examine where, what kind, how many and by whom facilities and activities for young people are being provided
- Assess the need and demand for facilities
- Consider what might be done further to improve the facilities in place for young people, particularly in the context of Big Society developments and the withdrawal of support for universal youth provision by the Youth Service
- Report to the OSMC thence the Executive with recommendations as appropriate.

3. Membership

3.1 The Members of the cross-party working group were Councillors Peter Argyle, Sheila Ellison, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe and Ieuan Tuck. Councillor Ellison was elected as the Chairman.

4. Methodology

4.1 The review has been conducted by a small, cross-party task group, working with Council officers and staff from other organisations.
The task group held the meetings outlined in the table below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Srl</th>
<th>Meeting date</th>
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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Monday 31 October 2011</td>
<td>• Election of the Chairman&lt;br&gt;• Agreement of the Terms of Reference&lt;br&gt;• Background briefing on survey findings and previous Scrutiny activity&lt;br&gt;(Jason Teal, Performance, Research and Consultation Manager; Jessica Collett, Policy Executive; and David Lowe, Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager)</td>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Thursday 24 November 2011</td>
<td>• The strategic approach to provision of activities&lt;br&gt;• Critical success factors and the barriers to achieving them&lt;br&gt;• The link with anti-social behaviour&lt;br&gt;(Dave Seward, Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People Chief Executive; Julia Waldman, Acting Head of Youth Services and Commissioning; David Appleton, Head of Cultural Services; and Susan Powell, Safer Communities Partnership Team Manager)</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Monday 12 December 2011</td>
<td>• The operational approach to the provision of activities&lt;br&gt;(Lisa Beith, Area Youth Consultant, West Berkshire Council; Sarah Emery, Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People; Jenny McIntyre, Greenham Community Youth Project; Allan McIntyre, Neighbourhood Warden; and Sarah Steevenson, Former Chair, Thatcham Neighbourhood Action Group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Tuesday 10 January 2012</td>
<td>• Role of schools&lt;br&gt;• Community planning&lt;br&gt;(Val Houldy, Acting Chair, Secondary Heads Forum; Sarah Ward, Community Council for Berkshire; and Jo Naylor, Principal Policy Officer (Communities))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Tuesday 7 February 2012</td>
<td>• Formulation of the recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Tuesday 13 March 2012</td>
<td>• Agreement of the final report</td>
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4.3 The minutes from meetings at Srls 01 to 04 are shown at Appendices A to D respectively.

5. **Acknowledgements and thanks**

5.1 The Chairman and Members of the Task Group would like to acknowledge and thank all those who supported and gave evidence to the review.
6. Findings

6.1 The findings of the task group are outlined below.

Assessing need

a. The experience from the parish plan development process is that communities face common challenges in providing enough and appropriate ways of giving young people things to do.

b. 75% of communities in the District have parish plans in place and they are encouraged through the development process to seek the views of young people. Care however needs to be exercised in ensuring that, once sought, their views are followed through into action.

c. Parish plans show that there is a demand for youth clubs and recreational areas including tennis courts, skate parks, goal posts and cycle routes/BMX tracks. Although the provision of physical assets frequently presents less of a challenge than overcoming the reluctance of adults to volunteer and provide support, it is not always the case that suitable premises are universally available.

d. Frequently young people do not want to participate in organised activity, preferring to just socialise with their friends.

e. There is a mis-match between the expectation of the public and the funds that are available for the provision of activities for young people. Since the public sector spending cuts and the resultant reduction in services, the non-state sectors have not fully replaced that which had been withdrawn.

f. The best results are achieved when young people are allowed to articulate for themselves what it is they want and they do not have others speaking on their behalf.

g. Agencies such as the Neighbourhood Wardens or police can provide valuable local knowledge about the location and the type of activities that might be established for young people. In their interaction with young people, they can also encourage participation.

Service delivery

h. The Council’s Youth Service’s detached workers are engaged in promoting the positive image of young people by making them aware that they need to be considerate of others.

i. West Berkshire Council is not now commissioning universal youth services but is focussing on vulnerable groups and young people at risk. Targeted and localised activities tend to be more successful in their take-up than more generalised provision. Communities however are cautious about taking over where the state has withdrawn.

j. The use of the title ‘Youth Service’ by the local authority creates the unachievable expectation from the public that it caters for all the needs of all young people.

k. The ‘big society’ concept of community delivery of activities for young people has largely been operating in rural communities for some time. Urban centres are therefore more likely to be affected by the withdrawal of the Youth Service.

l. The Council’s support to communities, for example by bearing the cost of CRB checks, is appreciated by other organisations also providing support. The
provision of support, not just from the public sector, can be the difference between activities succeeding or failing.

m. The substantial reductions in central government funding have had a major impact on the provision of youth services and the grant funding of projects. The local authority, parish councils, voluntary groups, schools, clubs and benefactors have had to take up much of the responsibility for funding for the delivery and maintenance of youth activities.

n. There are significant numbers of facilities and activities in the district but they are not always delivered in a co-ordinated way. In general, people in more deprived areas are more aware of initiatives, as are the parents of teenagers. Activities might be categorised by:

- Whether they are free or chargeable
- Organised or self-organised
- Those based around public facilities – libraries, pubs, leisure centres, play grounds, skate parks
- Those provided by schools – pre- and post-school activities, sports leadership
- Those that are community based or run by voluntary organisations or interest groups.

o. Clubs can help themselves in attracting and retaining volunteers by becoming more business-like, through the use, for example, of role descriptions or reducing the scope for off-putting open-ended commitments.

p. Bringing young people together with older people in intergenerational activities can lead to increased engagement by young people in positive activities, a decrease in negative behaviour by young people, a greater understanding amongst adults of young people’s behaviour and a community-wide improvement in the promotion and profile of young people.

q. Schools provide a positive influence on young people outside of normal teaching hours through the growing use of after school clubs and other activities. Out of school hours activity frequently has a positive effect on the behaviour and confidence of young people, the most important of which is the opportunity to make friends. This leads directly to better educational outcomes.

r. On leaving full time education, and the supportive and directive environment that it provides, many young people frequently do not have the necessary skills to understand the leisure-time opportunities available to them. Although improving, links are not always in place between schools and community groups and there is apparently some mis-understanding between them.

s. The provision of a sports or playing field or park, with maintained facilities such as goal posts or a skating area that is kept clean and safe, frequently gives better value for money than other more expensive facilities, for example a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

t. Frequently the success of clubs depends on a small number of key individuals, who have the necessary skills and ambition to ensure effective delivery. To retain their engagement requires significant amounts of support.
u. Commercial facilities, such as sports halls or leisure centres, appear to be a resource available to young people and their support communities that has yet to be fully exploited.

**Links between youth activities and anti-social behaviour**

v. National research indicates that the public generally inflates the extent to which young people are involved in anti-social behaviour and there are consequently widespread negative perceptions of youth. This creates challenges for young people. Despite a reduction in the volume of youth crime in recent years, public perception in West Berkshire is yet to change.

w. Data from Thames Valley Police does not support the frequent assertion that there is a link between anti-social behaviour and an absence of things for young people to do. Young people tend to act anti-socially for a range of reasons (family background, mental health, emotional issues and peer pressure), not just because of a lack of available activities.

x. Young people can be deterred from anti-social behaviour but doing so requires a multi-faceted approach that includes education, family engagement and police enforcement, in addition to places for them to go and things for them to do.

y. Demographics tend to dictate that there is more anti-social behaviour where there are more young people.

**Communication**

z. An understanding of the variety and breadth of activities is not always easily communicated to young people, although the Youth Service has recently introduced a leaflet detailing activities, regardless of provider.

**Obstacles and inducements to take up**

aa. The ‘professionalisation’ of youth services has worked against the establishment and operation of community groups and the increased requirement for training standards, CRB checks and Health and Safety legislation has deterred would-be volunteers. However, although sometimes seen as burdensome, the ‘bureaucracy’ of risk assessments and CRB checks is necessary in the modern age to give parents the assurance that their children are being appropriately cared for.

bb. An absence of transport is consistently cited by both providers and young people as the number one barrier to accessing activities and facilities. This can be exacerbated by parental reluctance to allow their children to travel alone. The absence of places to meet to do the things that they want to do is the second biggest hurdle. Prohibitive cost of participation also ranks highly, particularly for families who have more than one child.

cc. Young people can be encouraged, but not compelled, to participate in activities and use the facilities provided. To expect otherwise is unrealistic.

dd. A key determinant in ensuring that young people remain engaged in positive activities is the maintenance of a relationship as they progress through groups catering for different ages: a teenager is more likely to be involved in gainful activity if they began doing so at an earlier age than if not.

ee. The lessons learnt and experienced from community youth activities do not appear to be widely shared between and amongst providers.
7. Conclusions

7.1 West Berkshire remains a place in which there is much for young people to do and those working directly or indirectly in communities with young people find them to be generally courteous and well behaved. There remains however the perception that they are not well catered for and that they may consequently engage in anti-social behaviour.

7.2 The desire in most communities to provide more for young people can be sometimes be thwarted by obstacles that should be able, with the right commitment of those who are most able to influence them, to be addressed, if not totally.

7.3 In playing its part, the Council can demonstrate that its withdrawal from providing universal youth services is being replaced by a willingness to help communities to help themselves. Adoption of the recommendations following should go some way to assisting the achievement of that outcome.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Task Group recommends that:

a. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and Youth Service should work, including through the networks available to Elected Members, to encourage schools to enable community groups to access the use of their facilities.

b. The Executive Member for Finance, Property and Health and Safety should take steps to allow and promote the use of Council property by community groups. This should include through tenancy agreements for let assets.

c. The Executive Member for Partnerships, Equality, the Visions and Communities should encourage town and parish councils to allow the use of their property by community groups.

d. The Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational), ICT and Customer Services should critically examine the opportunities for the Council to allow the public use of the Council’s own transport fleet, particularly in locations where there is an expressed need for community transport, working to remove bureaucratic burdens and obstacles where they exist.

e. The Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational), ICT, Customer Services should introduce a mechanism to assess the extent to which Council transport assets are being utilised by community groups.

f. The Executive Member for the Environment, “Cleaner Greener”, Public Protection, Culture and Leisure should identify measures to encourage and increase the use by community groups of the Council’s leisure facilities, for example sports and leisure centres.

g. When considering change of use applications by and for community groups, the Executive Member for Planning and Housing should ensure that planning policies to allow favourable weighting and consideration of the wider societal benefits that their activities usually generate.

h. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Youth Service should continue to support organisations, such as the Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People, that enable community groups to operate effectively, for example through the provision of training and CRB checks.
i. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Youth Service should implement a comprehensive plan, which includes the use of social media, to communicate to young people the wealth of spare time opportunities and activities that are available to them.

j. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Youth Service should create and promote guidance on the key steps to be taken on the establishment of youth community groups. This might take the form of a ‘Youth Club Starter Pack’.

k. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Youth Service should take steps to identify and the remove those Youth Service practices that prevent or obstruct the use of its facilities by community groups.

l. The Executive Member for Partnerships, Equality, the Visions and Communities should establish a mechanism to allow the sharing across community groups of resources such as training opportunities, skills, expertise and knowledge.

m. The Executive Member for Partnerships, Equality, the Visions and Communities should encourage communities developing parish plans to consider items and activities that have a lower purchase/build cost but provide better value than more expensive but less flexible items such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs).

n. The Executive Member for Strategy, Performance and Community Safety should ensure that budgets allocated for the provision of Community Wardens, across all contributing organisations, are protected to enable their invaluable work to continue.

o. The Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Youth Service should ensure that budgets allocated for the provision of detached youth workers are protected to enable their invaluable work to continue.

Appendices

Appendix A – Minutes of the task group meeting held on 31 October 2011
Appendix B – Minutes of the task group meeting held on 24 November 2011
Appendix C – Minutes of the task group meeting held on 12 December 2011
Appendix D – Minutes of the task group meeting held on 11 January 2012
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS IN WEST BERKSHIRE

MINUTES

Monday 31st October 2011

Present: Councillors: Sheila Ellison (Chairman), Gwen Mason, Peter Argyle, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe and Ieuan Tuck.

Officers: David Lowe (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Jason Teal, Jessica Collett and David Baker.

Apologies: None

1. Election of Chairman

There was one nomination for Chairman proposed by Councillor Gwen Mason and seconded by Councillor Peter Argyle. At the vote the motion was carried unanimously and Councillor Sheila Ellison was elected Chairman.

2. Agreement of the Scope and Terms of Reference

There was a lively discussion as Members commented and refined the scope and Terms of Reference of the Task Group. The question was raised as to why this scrutiny work had been brought about. David Lowe explained the request had come from OSMC and was a result of continued public perception that the need for improved facilities for teenagers remained the public's highest priority over recent years. That changes were currently taking place within Youth Services as it adjusted from universal provision to a targeted service that concentrated on the most vulnerable made the issue even more relevant.

There was clear agreement that the mapping of existing provision within West Berkshire was an essential starting point. Jessica Collett provided details on a new Youth Activities leaflet and a database of information that would be added to the Council's website very shortly which would provide a sound base of information.

The assessment of need and the demand for services would be required to determine what might be influencing public perception. There was a need to understand within the existing provision why this was not being taken up by some groups of teenagers.

It was agreed that it was important to understand the impact of the changes taking place in the context of the Big Society. Questions that arose included understanding what was actually happening to those services being withdrawn, were replacement services proving to be successful and sustainable and how best could the Council evaluate, influence and support the third sector's activities. A need was identified to understand what barriers (communications, insurance,
3. **Background Briefing**

Jason Teal, (Performance, Research and Consultation Manager) gave a presentation on the community perceptions of activities for teenagers available in West Berkshire.

There were 4 key sources of data to help inform this:

- Annual resident survey 2010
- 2008 survey of what young people do in their free time
- Parish Plans
- Tellus4 national survey 2009

The detail of these was published on the Consultation Finder.

The conclusions drawn from the survey work were:

- Activities for teenagers was a consistently high priority amongst adults with (59%) or without (43%) dependent children
- This was most keenly felt in Thatcham (54%) and Reading suburbs (61%)
- Nearly ¾ of young people gave a positive impression of the local area
- Key to young people were personal safety, street cleanliness and shopping facilities
- Improvements in organised activities were cited in 1/3 of cases – this was consistent across age groups

Jason Teal also advised that there was a mixture of requiring some organised activity and for the provision of space for more informal activities.

Parish Plans were identified as a valuable source of views and requirements such as:

- More physical facilities
- Revenue related facilities – i.e. additional Youth Service support
- More research on the views of local people in the community including young people
- An emphasis on more volunteers to help run clubs etc. Community Action West Berkshire (CAWB) had undertaken work to pull parishes together in this respect. It was commented that a number of checks were required before someone could become a volunteer.
- Facilities for parental support – nurseries etc
• Home to school transport

4. **Refinement of the Scope and Terms of Reference**

A copy of the latest revised Scope and Terms of Reference is attached via an active link - see under Section 6.

5. **Future meeting dates and actions agreed**

Revised Scope and Terms of Reference to be drawn up and circulated – Action DL
Youth Activities Leaflet and details on database to be circulated – Action JC

The following meeting arrangements were discussed and agreed:

Action DL/DB to set up and Members to attend.

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<tr>
<td>24/11/11</td>
<td>10.30-12.30</td>
<td>CEO’s Office</td>
<td>Interviewing Strategy &amp; Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/12/11</td>
<td>16.00-17.30</td>
<td>CEO’s Office</td>
<td>Interviewing Practitioners’ Operational View</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/01/12</td>
<td>10.30-12.30</td>
<td>CEO’s Office</td>
<td>Interviewing or Site Visit – Views from Young People</td>
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6. **Active References and useful web-links**

The following (Ctrl & Click under Citrix) references and links may be of value:

- Consultation Finder
- Tellus4 survey
- Youth Activities Leaflet
- Parish Planning
- Parish Plans index
- Revised Activities for Teenagers – Scope and Terms Of Reference
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS IN WEST BERKSHIRE
MINUTES
Thursday 24\textsuperscript{th} November 2011

Present: Councillors: Sheila Ellison (Chairman), Gwen Mason, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe and Ieuan Tuck.
Officers: David Lowe (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Julia Waldman, Dave Seward, David Appleton, Susan Powell and David Baker.

Apologies: Peter Argyle

7. Minutes of 31\textsuperscript{st} October 2011

Task Group minutes for 31\textsuperscript{st} October were approved by the chairman.

8. Matters arising and update on actions

There were no matters arising from previous meetings

9. The Strategic approach to the provision of activities:

- Youth Service – Julia Waldman

Julia Waldman introduced her session by referring to a number of recent reports:

1. Young people and crime: they’re not as bad as we think - 28 June 2010

   New research from NFER once again opens up the mismatch between the perceptions of the extent to which young people are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, and the reality.

   \texttt{http://www.nfer.ac.uk/about-nfer/press/releases/young-people-and-crime-theyre-not-as-bad-as-we-think.cfm}

2. Youth Taskforce study of perceptions in Youth Crime Action Plan areas – June 2010

   The Youth Taskforce in the Department for Education commissioned this piece of work to explore the views of residents within Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) areas to understand more about perceptions regarding young people and crime, anti-social behaviour and alcohol use/misuse and efforts to tackle these problems.
3. Young people’s civic attitudes and practice – November 2010


4. DfES Children’s Services; The Market for Provision of Positive - Activities for Young People.

This report focuses on the market for the provision of positive activities for young people (aged 13-19) in England. Structured activities (including sports and physical activities, attending clubs and societies and volunteering activities). Unstructured activities that young people choose to engage in during their leisure time (including, for example, going to the cinema and other similar leisure pursuits).

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RW75.pdf

She then went on to advise that the Youth Offending Team manager had observed a drop in youth crime including public order, violence, criminal damage and violence against the person.

Despite statistical evidence showing that fewer young people are now involved in offending, public perception has yet to change, with a minority of British adults overestimating the number of young people involved in crime. This leaves young people facing the challenge of growing up in a culture that has widespread negative perceptions of youth.

In addressing the question of what works for young people, Julia was able to inform the task group that the following factors are important:

- Hearing young people’s voices, rather than speaking on their behalf. Young people are getting involved in all stages of activities designed to improve their profile and public image and being given opportunities to be part of the solution to crime. It is also important to allow them the chance to respond directly to the negativity often levelled at them in the media and at public meetings.

- Intergenerational activities can be highly successful. They specifically bring together younger and older people, who can have a particularly negative view, and provide opportunities to learn from each other and to challenge stereotypical views and misconceptions.

- Highly visible activities, including the use of facilities which can be set up in ‘hot spot’ areas can have significant impacts on public perceptions.

The benefits were:

- Increased engagement of young people in positive activities

- A decrease in negative behaviour by young people
• A greater understanding, amongst adults, of young people’s behaviour

• A community-wide improvement in the promotion and profile of young people.

In addressing what needed to be done, Julia advised that local authorities should undertake an audit of current activities designed to have a positive impact on perceptions and measure the impact of these activities more systematically. This would provide clearer direction for those developing, commissioning and championing work locally. Council’s should also adopt a more strategic approach with coordinated activities, rather than many different groups undertaking activities independently.

In general, people in more deprived areas more aware of initiatives, as were parents of teenagers.

Cllr Sheila Ellison noted the need to promote volunteering particularly as it had a strong track record in the past.

David Lowe commented that the previous scrutiny review had highlighted there was a need for leadership across all sectors and activities and that the Local Authority should take that lead under the Children’s Partnership.

Cllr Gwen Mason noted that all the witnesses had raised the role of schools as an issue as they became increasingly autonomous. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Secondary Head Teacher Forum should be invited to attend the Task Group meeting on 10/01/12.

Dave Seward stated that Local Authorities are not going to commission universal services but will now focus on vulnerable groups and young people at risk.

Julia Waldman commented that improved partnership working in the area of community transport providers may be a way of providing better transport for young people to access town centres and attend local activities.

David Lowe suggested that Parish Planning should be included in the session planned for 10/01/12. There was a 10-15 minute video of young people involved in that planning process that the Members might consider viewing.

• Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP) – Dave Seward

Dave Seward set the scene by describing how BACYP had been providing activities for young people through boys and girls clubs over the last 60-70 years. Today the main focus was to provide young people with inspiration and motivation through the development of personal skills and the provision of activities. BACYP tried to focus on the minority of children who were generally excluded from many activities such as those in Local Authority Care, young offenders, children living in deprived areas. BACYP worked with three main age groups – 8-11 year olds in play groups, 11-14 year olds on a wider range of activities and 14-19 year olds on community lead projects.
Successive governments had “played with” youth services as they imposed different visions and strategies on the provision of youth services. The professionalisation of youth services had worked against voluntary and community groups. Local Authority Youth Services had been badly guided by government – becoming too large/complex and over professionalised, often concentrating on larger population centres. Increased demands for training standards, CRB checks and Health and Safety legislation has deterred volunteer support. Substantial reductions in central government funding had had a major impact on the provision of youth services and the grant funding of projects.

Partnership working amongst Local Authorities, parish councils, voluntary groups, schools, clubs and benefactors had had to take up much of the responsibility to maintain and deliver youth activities.

Cllr Tim Metcalf asked what Local Authorities did well/not well.

Dave Seward responded with an example at Bracknell Forest which by working initially with 16 year olds to build skills, leadership and trust within the community, went on to develop young team leaders who acted as local ambassadors.

What did not work well were Youth and Community experts imposing their answers on community groups and where services were often tied to ‘office hours’ only. Weekends and evening activities were essential to work effectively.

It was key to separate youth activities from youth work. Success was all about engaging young people and not just saying how services should be delivered.

Cllr Gwen Mason commented that in West Berkshire we were short of youth leaders and was interested in the example that Bracknell had been working on.

- Cultural Service – David Appleton

David Appleton briefly reviewed the results of recent survey information:

- District survey had for some years had identified that the adult perception was insufficient activities were available for young people and this was ranked as the highest priority for improvement.

- Tellus survey data was available on the web but survey was based 1 school and some of its pupils within our area.

- Paper Chain 2010 a survey of 5359 young people yielded very clear evidence from young people that the top two needs were places to meet to things that they wanted do and transport to/from existing facilities particularly during evenings and at weekends.

David A agreed with David S that Youth Work and Services was very different to working with young people.

There were lots of youth activities available in West Berkshire, operating day in and day out, often run by voluntary groups. There was a need to understand fully
what was available how those activities were split by different criteria such as:

- Free vs chargeable activities
- Organised vs self organised
- Based around public facilities – library, pubs, leisure centres, play grounds, skate parks, etc.
- School sector - pre/post school activities, sports leadership.
- Community based voluntary organisation and interest groups.
- Commercial sector – off-peak programme targeted at young people with discounted rates or use of subsidised programmes supported by Local Authorities or other partners

Issues were how to effectively communicate what was available to young people.

Transport particularly for smaller rural communities was a major barrier.

A need to forge improved links and transition between schools and the local community.

Dave Seward agreed that transition was really difficult to manage and needed specific resources to help individual groups achieve a sustainable position.

David Appleton commented that not all schools were welcoming to community links and involvement. The Arts Council was slow to encourage organisations to plan their futures.

Cllr Sheila Ellison thought that parents often only valued the services/activities that they paid for.

Cllr Tim Metcalfe gave an interesting example of Purley who were looking to install a MUGA at a potential cost of £50-70K in a meadow without any lighting or shelter facilities. Did that represent value for money, or would that resource be better put into improving local transport.

Dave Seward agreed that MUGA facilities needed to be carefully controlled and managed to ensure success and they often carried a high maintenance cost. Whereas a sports field/park with maintained facilities such as goal posts, skate park etc, kept free of dog fouling and dangerous dogs and ideally patrolled by local wardens were much more appealing to young people when they felt they were in a safe environment.

Community cinema groups had proved successful in many rural villages but very few offered any content of interest to young people.

Cllr Gwen Mason thought the most common need voiced by young people was the need for small groups to have access to cheap public transport in/out of town.
Dave Seward confirmed that needs were constantly changing

Susan Powell commented that lots of young people did not want to be organised but were more interested in having somewhere to hang out together.

David Lowe commented that funding was being withdrawn and costs were being passed down onto local groups and individuals. Youth Services were moving away from universal provision to focusing support onto vulnerable groups.

Dave Seward thought that small local services (often parish council or community based) that focussed on a local issues were much more likely to succeed. General services were too costly and needed to be replaced by small local projects or initiatives.

10. The link with anti-social behaviour – Susan Powell

Anti-Social Behaviour

Notes provided by Susan Powell:

Consulted with Partnership Analyst – access to TVP data – including reported ASB.

Aware that there are other data bases recording reported ASB – Housing Associations e.g. Sovereign.

Difficult to analyse ASB – reporting and definitions change regularly and there have been reclassifications of ASB over recent years.

For today looked at TVP reported ASB data – 1 year 2010.

From data analysis her position was that there is no evidential link between activities for young people (or lack of) and ASB.

Her rationale was that there are many calls to TVP categorised as ASB but this is an extremely diverse category covering:

Noise nuisance (shouting), door knocking and tipping over bins to just being there. This category also covers – drunkenness, fire, party, domestic, playing football, fireworks, smashing bottles and fighting.

Unhelpfully the majority are just categorised – nuisance/youth.

In 2010:

Total ASB reports – 1370, Reports including the word youth – 822, Others – 548

Currently ASB down 24% on this time last year, Crime down 11%.
Last 4 years significant reductions in both ASB and crime.

But remember not all ASB is youth related.

In respect of locations – hot spots – urban areas where there are more YP – demographics. Villages have ASB too.

Shops – report ASB – but YP will generally gather where they feel safe – victims of ASB/crime – shops are well lit and other people around.

Young people act anti-socially for a wide range of reasons not just because of lack of youth activities - family background and circumstances, mental health and emotional issues, peer pressure, poor engagement with education etc.

If youth activities are removed it can not be presumed that young people who have previously been ‘well behaved’ will start to behave anti-socially. Similarly it can not be presumed that if youth activities are introduced that those young people who are behaving anti-socially will engage with the activity and stop their ASB.

There have been many situations where activities have been introduced and there has been a perceived impact on ASB – roller barn in Thatcham, but – we need to be careful in drawing bold conclusions as we have not examined which YP participated in the roller barn and which YP are known to the police for ASB etc. It also happened over the summer holidays.

Also remember that youth is a very unspecific definition and people reporting ‘Youths’ to the police could be referring to young people and/or young adults.

As indicated already ASB covers a wide range of things – many which would happen if there are youth activities or not – they are things that young people do and have always done – playing football, gathering and being noisy and just hanging out.

Young people can be deterred from behaving anti-socially but it requires a multi faceted approach including education, family engagement, police enforcement etc.

Young people can not be deterred from being young people which can include being loud, wanting to hang out in groups and shun ‘authority’

Investment – detached teams – work with other officers (Wardens and Police) to engage with young people in their community – where they want to be and signpost them to the wide range of activities there are – sports clubs, community groups, voluntary organisations.

Encourage young people to do something but can’t presume that they will want to participate

Many young people do not want to be ‘organised’ and needed the freedom to choose what they want to do – Youth Strategy Basingstoke 10 years ago.

Cllr Tim Metcalfe asked was crime and ASB actually falling. He agreed that
reported crime was falling but was concerned at the anecdotal evidence that a lot of low level crime was under reported by the public because of the perception the police were too busy to take action. Was the 101 system working properly.

Cllr Sheila Ellison commented that within the Thatcham NAG the roller barn initiative was perceived by residents to reduce crime and ASB – “there were less kids on the street”

David Appleton reminded Members of the Splash Program in 1995-2001 that provided a wide range of activities for young people during the summer holidays was also perceived as having a direct impact on reducing crime and ASB.

11. Future meeting dates and actions agreed

Invite the chair of the Secondary Head Teachers Forum to attend the task group as a witness at 10/01/12 meeting. Action DB

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS IN WEST BERKSHIRE

MINUTES
Monday 12th December 2011

Present: Councillors: Sheila Ellison (Chairman), Gwen Mason, Peter Argyle, Alan Macro and Tim Metcalfe.

Others: David Lowe (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Lisa Beith, Sarah Emery, Jenny McIntyre, Allan McIntyre, Stephanie Steevenson.

Apologies: Ieuan Tuck

12. Minutes of 24th November 2011

Task Group minutes for 24th November were approved by the task group.

13. Matters arising and update on actions

There were no matters arising from previous meetings

14. Observations on the Paper Chain exercise and results

Members observed that the results appeared to support the evidence received by the task group that transport and access was a key issue and that frequently what young people wanted was simple and low cost.

Play areas were provided through the Playbuilder Scheme and their refurbishment could be addressed through the Council’s scheme and other grants, it was highlighted that the cost of ongoing maintenance and safety testing was expensive. As these costs were increasingly shifted to other providers there was a risk that they could prove difficult to meet.

15. The operational view to the provision of activities

• Youth Service – Lisa Beith

Lisa Beith opened by showing Members of the task group a leaflet produced by the Youth Service that showed activities for young people in the District, regardless of provider. The document provided a comprehensive list that would be regularly updated and was available for download from the Council’s website.
Lisa advised that she saw the biggest barriers to young people engaging in activities as being the cost to them (or their parents) and transport, which was being addressed by the Children and Young People’s Partnership.

Most young people took part in some sort of organised activity but they also wanted access to unstructured time and space where they could ‘hang out’ with their friend and socialise.

The Anti Social Behaviour agenda had in the past criminalised the socialising activities of young people, who unlike adults did not have spaces of their own to use, particularly through the use of dispersal orders. More recently however the police had relaxed their approach to dealing with groups of young people in public spaces.

The Youth Service’s detached workers were engaged in promoting the positive image of young people by making them aware that they needed to be considerate of others.

The Youth Service was promoting its detached work, particularly in ‘hot spots’ that intelligence from the police, PCSO, wardens or the Early Intervention Team had indicated would benefit from it. These locations were mostly urban but included Lambourn, Burghfield and Mortimer. The work cut across social class and status.

Observation indicated that adult criminality influenced young people.

A ‘shadow’ Young People’s Partnership had been set up comprising young people themselves, to give them a voice in the provision of services to them. All were volunteers and came from different backgrounds. They included 2 young people who were currently in care and 1 care leaver. A link was being established between the adult and young people’s partnerships. A Special Educational Needs and disability forum was also to be set up.

Councillor Gwen Mason was able to advise that in St George’s Avenue, Newbury, the detached Youth Service work was having an impact on directing many young people to off-street activity. Positive feedback had been given, reinforcing the Service’s view that the targeting of its limited resources appeared to be working.

- Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP) – Sarah Emery

Sarah Emery opened by advising that there appeared to be a mismatch between the expectation of the public and the funding available for the provision of activities for young people.

She went on to say that since the public sector funding cuts and the resultant reduction in services, the non-state sector had not replaced that which had been withdrawn.

BACYP was working with young people to assess their needs and taking steps to meet them, however there was some local reluctance in communities to take up the slack because of the perceived associated bureaucracy.
Facilitating the transition from state to non-state provision was a key activity for BACYP, as was ensuring that community groups when established were sustainably so.

Most of the groups with which the BACP was working were aimed at young people who were 12 years and upwards, to directly replace those previously provided by the Youth Service.

The key to ensuring that young people remained engaged in activities was the maintenance of a relationship as they progressed through groups catering for different age groups: a teenager was more likely to be involved in gainful activity if they had begun doing so at an earlier age than if not. That the Youth Service was prevented by government rules from engaging with the under-13s made their task more difficult.

Lisa commented that the very title of ‘Youth Service’ created an expectation in the mind of the public that the local authority would cater for all the needs of young people. BACYP however did recognise the very narrow scope of the Youth Service’s responsibilities.

It was observed that the provision of a Youth Service was discretionary for the local authority and grant money was not ring fenced for it.

In order to be successful groups provided for young people needed their ownership and an element of control.

The Youth Service had a Service Level Agreement in place with BACYP for the development and support of youth clubs for 13+ in parishes.

BACYP was a membership organisation, at a cost of £80 per annum per member.

As the ‘big society’ concept of community delivery for activities for young people had largely been operating in rural communities for some time, urban centres were more likely to be affected by the withdrawal of the Youth Service.

The bearing by the Council of the cost of conducting CRB checks for volunteers was seen as being very valuable.

Clubs could help themselves in attracting and retaining volunteers by becoming more business-like, through the use, for example, of role descriptions. It was recognised by the Members of the task group that ‘bureaucracy’, like risk assessments and CRB checks, was necessary in the modern age to give parents the assurance that their children were being appropriately cared for.

It was not clear who had responsibility for ensuring that groups remained sustainable as the public sector withdrew from universal provision.

- Community Youth Project – Jenny McIntyre

By way of introduction Jenny advised that she provide full time support to youth activities in Greenham, specifically the Nightingales and Pigeons Farm estates.
The work formed part of the ‘Greater Greenham Project’, established to address the underlying problems in the area with the greatest deprivation in the District. Ensuring that young people had appropriate avenues to expend their energy was very much part of the project achieving its outcomes.

Jenny agreed that cost was a barrier to access for young people, especially for families with multiple children, and the Community Youth Project priced accordingly.

Specifically in the project area, transport was not seen to be an issue, although there was a general reluctance amongst parents to allow their children to travel alone.

The CYP catered for all ages from 8 years upwards, a policy which was seen as enabling older young people to be engaged with their younger siblings. It provided a safe, warm place where young people could socialise with their friends without being judged.

The wardens’ local knowledge had been invaluable in ensuring that appropriate groups and activities were set up and in encouraging participation from young people. Word of the activities available spread quickly around parents after the project was established.

The CYP operated with only 3 rules:

- Respect each other
- Respect adults
- Respect property

Transgressions were dealt with on a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ basis.

The clubs were linked closely with organisations such as the police and wardens, which was essential to their continuing success.

Frequently reported ‘youth antisocial behaviour’ was actually perpetrated by young adults and not children.

There were wider societal benefits to the clubs as a number of volunteers had come forward from the community. Volunteering had given them the confidence to participate in other activities and some had gone on to secure paid employment.

Jenny repeated the view that community groups need ongoing support to succeed.

Unlike the Youth Service, the CYP did not have its hands tied by red tape or centrally imposed constraints and boundaries.

The project was youth led and had a Youth Council.
16. Neighbourhood wardens – Allan McIntyre

Allan McIntyre advised that the Neighbourhood Wardens provided eyes and ears on the ground for a number of organisations and they interacted frequently with young people. Generally he found that young people were courteous and well behaved. He believed that clubs and other activities were most effective when people from all the organisations with an interest in ensuring young people were not engaged in negative activity worked together.

Having worked in a number of locations around the District Allan was aware that there was plenty of provision of activities for young people. Some young people did however become disillusioned if their expectations were raised and then not met.

There was a risk that volunteers working with young people could burn out if they were not appropriately supported, nurtured and recognised.

The wardens built relationships with young people and directed them to appropriate venues and activities, including those offering flexible ‘drop in, drop out’.

17. Thatcham Neighbourhood Action Group – Stephanie Steevenson

Stephanie Steevenson gave a case study of the Thatcham Roller Barn, a project that had been 2 years in the making.

It was in direct response to the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) identified priority of addressing anti social behaviour and a demand articulated by young people themselves.

The scheme had cost £4.4k, which had been provided by grants, and had delivered 10 roller discos on Saturday nights between 1900 and 2100 at the Kennet Leisure Centre, which would have otherwise closed at 1800. The equipment and staff to handle it had been brought in by a company called ‘Skate House’, from Coventry.

Delivery on the evening was supported by members of the NAG, the wardens and volunteers. Entry was set at £1 per head to encourage participation, rather than to off-set costs.

The first evening had 40 young people attend but by the final event numbers reached 105. Most stayed and skated for around 40 minutes and enjoyed the social area which had a snack bar run by the scouts. The disco was promoted by flyer to pupils at the Kennet school initially and then by word of mouth.

Insurance cover was met by Skate House but volunteers provided first aid when required. All participants were required to sign a disclaimer and were provided with protective equipment.

The young people who were in the target group were not initially hit but by the time the project ended the police reported that ASB had dropped by 61%.
Unfortunately no arrangements were made before the project ended for it to continue through volunteers or through the leisure centre. Members felt that this was an opportunity missed. This highlighted that frequently success of clubs and activities is dependent on key individuals and they needed significant amounts of support.

Members thought that there could be scope to influence the leisure centre to take up activities such as the roller disco at times when there might be a significant demand from young people (ie Saturday nights).

The lessons that were learnt from the exercise could be recorded and shared with other groups or NAGs.

18. Future meeting dates and actions agreed

Invite the chair of the Secondary Head Teachers Forum to attend the task group as a witness at 10/01/12 meeting. Action DB

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS IN WEST BERKSHIRE
MINUTES
Tuesday 10th January 2012

Present: Councillors: Sheila Ellison (Chairman), Gwen Mason, Peter Argyle, Tim Metcalfe and Ieuan Tuck.
Others: David Lowe (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Jo Naylor, Val Houldey, Sarah Ward.

Apologies: Alan Macro

1. Minutes of 12th December 2011

Task Group minutes for 12th December were approved by the task group.

2. Matters arising and update on actions

There were no matters arising from previous meetings.

3. Parish planning: what communities want

Jo Naylor, supported by Sarah Ward, gave a presentation that opened by showing that of the 63 communities in the District, 47 (75%) had parish plans in place. Preparation for the plans involved extensive consultation with the community and informed the picture of local need. The plan development process encouraged the collection of the view of young people and experience showed that there were common issues across communities and also between young and older people.

The drawing up of Mortimer parish plan had included a consultation in the primary school and focus groups in the secondary. Both the questionnaire and the medium through which it was completed were decided by young people themselves.

It was important that once sought, the views of young people were followed through into action.

65% of plans that have been drawn up to include the views of young people suggested that facilities or activities were lacking in the District. Within this figure, 47% of plans highlighted the need for a youth club and 42% indicated that recreational areas or playgrounds – both popular with young people – needed improvement, although this latter figure might not now reflect the work that had been undertaken through the Playbuilder scheme.
Updates given on 3 of the plans that were already 5 years old showed that the communities concerned were still trying to set up community groups and youth clubs. The Yattenden parish plan ‘refresh’ articulated the need for extended youth club opening hours.

Communities frequently focussed on physical assets rather than the people required and the ongoing support that they might need to run activities from them. In most cases the buildings existed but the obstacle preventing the setting up and extension of these clubs appeared to be an absence of volunteers. Before asking for bricks and mortar, communities might be better served by asking what support or mentoring could be provided. BACYP ran training sessions for volunteers (over 3 Saturdays) and operated an ‘Empowering young people’s projects’ grant programme. Members were of the view that training and support were key to the successful operation of clubs, although no data was available to assess the effectiveness of the training delivered.

Adults appeared to be reluctant to give open ended commitments and turnover in volunteers had an effect on provision. The requirement for volunteers to have CRB checks was seen as being a barrier.

Youth clubs provided an informal environment not available to structured activities such as Scouting. Youth clubs were also used in some cases as the meeting point for groups undertaking physical activities.

Young people have a demand for sporting facilities. The sorts of physical facilities that were included in parish plans included:

- tennis courts (9%)
- skate parks (15%)
- goal posts (6%)
- more cycle routes/BMX tracks (9%)

Some of these facilities, for example the tennis courts, could be multi-use but the location and positioning of them could cause and had caused local friction. Cycle routes require approved access to land.

The presentation by Young People in Chievely for a skate park had led to adults helping them to secure the required funding.

6% of communities expressed the need for better promotion or finance of existing facilities (ie making use of village halls for activities). 1 plan included a request for a swimming pool.

The ambition to establish a youth council or other forum and to improve consultation with young people was mentioned in 35% of the plans. The ‘social’ clubs most mentioned were for film (35%), drama (31%), craft (15%), dancing (8%) and computer activities (8%). The set up of clubs for rugby, tennis and football were also mentioned. A network of community cinemas had been established but these were, with the exception of Thatcham, not exclusively for young people.
Accessibility to facilities and activities was highlighted by communities as being a significant issue, the two primary aspects of the problem being how young people got to the activities or how the activities were taken to them.

West Berkshire Council provided £44k of funding each year for the achievement of actions in parish plans and there was also a small amount of money available through the ‘vibrant villages’. There was no funding explicitly for the provision of facilities or activities for young people.

Money was also becoming available through the Armed Forces Community Covenant Fund and bids had been submitted for facilities in Hermitage and Burghfield.

4. **Schools**

Val Houldey opened by stating that schools provided a positive influence on young people outside normal teaching hours through the use of after school clubs and other activities. That they were able to do so was down to the quality of very committed school staff and despite the cessation of extended schools funding.

Although provision was not universal, schools continued to operate those activities they valued the most and there was a growth in the number of after school clubs, often in those areas of most need.

At her own school, The Downs, after school clubs were run by Teaching Assistants on three nights per week. The sessions ran until 1700 and parents were not charged. Funding for transport was a major challenge for the school but the £15k - £20k per annum outlay was considered a necessary and worthwhile outlay. The minibuses were also used for other activities. The funding came from the Pupil Premium, a revenue stream for the support of low-income families.

The Teaching Assistants were paid for their time and it was believed that if payments were to cease then so would the clubs. Members of the Parent/Teacher Association were reluctant to contribute to the running of the club as they frequently had work commitments. The school worked in partnership with BACYP which provided access to constructive activities such as ‘splash’ and cooking.

The scheme had seen improvements in the social skills of participants and it allowed those who had otherwise had difficulty to make friends, a key factor in helping young people to do better at school.

Schools were likely to welcome applications by community groups to make more use of school facilities and there was scope for closer working between each of the parties.

5. **Future meeting dates and actions agreed**

It was agreed that the group would meet again on Tuesday 7 February to agree its recommendations.