

# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP**

## **ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS IN WEST BERKSHIRE**

### **MINUTES**

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> 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

#### **6. Minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

Task Group minutes for 24<sup>th</sup> November were approved by the task group.

#### **7. Matters arising and update on actions**

There were no matters arising from previous meetings

#### **8. 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.

#### **9. 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.

## **10. 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'.

## **11. 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.

## 12. 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

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Activity</b>
10/01/12	10.30-12.30	CEO's Office	Parish Planning – Jo Naylor Pre/post school activity, schools' links with community groups – Val Houldey Head teacher The Downs Schoos, acting Chair, Seoncdary Heads Forum
			Interviewing or Site Visit – Views from Young People.