

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 6 May 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **6 May 2004** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs T J Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C J Lumley and P K Savill.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bourne Leisure & Contracts Manager
M Martin Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

Acting Inspector K Diable-White, Rayleigh Division, Essex Police
County Cllr R A Pearson, Essex County Council

223 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 16 April 2004 were both approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

224 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T Livings declared a personal interest by virtue of being the Council's representative for the Warehouse Centre, the Chairman of the Youth Strategy group – Rayleigh & Castle Point and a school governor.

Cllr Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of the STAR Partnership and a school governor.

225 REVIEW OF POLICIES AND SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE DISTRICT

The Chairman welcomed Acting Inspector Diable-White to the meeting, together with Cllr Pearson who was representing Cllr Mrs T Chapman, the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families. They had been invited to attend at the request of Members of this Committee at its meeting held on 16 April 2004.

In response to Members' questions, the representative from Essex Police outlined the outworking of the recently enacted Dispersal Powers. This had represented a major shift in legislation and for the first time given Police the power to move people on regardless of whether they had committed a substantive offence, thus providing an opportunity to take measures to tackle youth nuisance. These powers would be invested by the Superintendent of the Division.

The Police would, therefore, have the power to detain two or more people (youth or adult) causing a nuisance between the hours of 9 pm and 6 am and take them to their home. An offence would have been committed if they did not disperse when asked. However, the police would need to be convinced that their actions were likely to cause harm or distress to others.

Areas where these powers could be used would need to be designated based on an audit trail of crime statistics, and taking into account information provided by local people. Potential areas within the District were currently being investigated. The next stage would be to liaise with the designated officer at the Council in order to share evidence before final agreement was taken for an order to be taken out. Details would then be publicised via the local media and notices displayed. Experience gained from recently designated areas outside the District demonstrated that these powers were effective in reducing instances of criminal damage, where this type of crime was a particular problem.

The Police officer confirmed that challenges had been mounted nationally to such orders, which emphasised the need to be satisfied that identified areas did currently represent significant problems, which had not responded to other attempts to deal with these.

In terms of tackling youth nuisance, Members were advised that the Police have to weigh and prioritise the objectives laid down by the Home Office, which rarely feature youth issues as a target, against the needs of the local community. The division had inserted a local objective of youth disorder, but tackling this effectively was still dependent upon resource issues.

At times of particular pressure, such as Friday and Saturday evenings, when there would normally be 4 police cars across the whole division, reported crimes involving actual or perceived threat to individuals had to take precedence. The Police recognised the problems, but in common with Members were aware that this was still one of the safest areas in England and Wales.

Members noted that the appointment of an Anti Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator was soon to be discussed at a meeting of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee. A number of areas would be considered in identifying anti-social behaviour sites. Members were reminded that in most instances, only one or two youths would be the main perpetrators of acts of criminal damage and the behaviour orders would be aimed at this

type of youth. These would work in conjunction with the dispersal powers. Anyone revoking an Anti-Social Behaviour Order would face imprisonment.

For the purposes of this review, the Police officer agreed with Members that young people frequently stated that they needed safe places where they could congregate together. If this could not be achieved as a commercial venture, then it would be necessary to invite the County Council to take a lead on this.

The Police officer reported that teen facilities provided in other areas of Essex had proved successful and in reality were frequently used as community facilities, in that other groups of people, such as young mums and dog walkers might make use of them during the day time, whilst providing an ideal venue for young people during the evenings.

He confirmed that work was also being done in connection with Parenting Orders, however, as a law enforcement body, their powers in this respect were limited.

The County Councillor agreed to take back the views of the Committee to the County Council on the provision of teen shelters, together with the view previously expressed by the Committee that it was disappointed at the County's youth service which now focused on providing activities with an educational rather than recreational bias, together with the unnecessarily high volume of paperwork it generated.

Members referred to the very well used facilities that already existed within the District at Warwick Drive, Rochford and Magnolia Park, Hawkwell and wondered whether a small green area in Southend Road, Rochford might be a potential site.

Conclusions

Members requested that the Leisure & Contracts Manager identify the current cost of spending on youth facilities by the County, District and the Parish/Town Councils, including identifying the numbers of staff involved. Members also requested that details of available open spaces, such as playing fields and sports pitches be provided.

Members noted that 3 responses had been received from the King Edmond, Sweyne Park and Fitzwimarc senior schools in addition to responses from eight of the Parish/Town Councils.

The Community Services Committee had agreed, at its meeting on 1 April 2004, the recommendation of this Committee that a young person's edition of Rochford District Matters be published on an annual basis, commencing with a condensed version this summer.

The Leisure & Contracts Manager tabled a draft report that drew together the information gathered during recent meetings of this Committee when it had met specifically to review the policies and services available for young people within the District.

Members requested that a three year strategy be **recommended to Council**, to include specific actions as follows:-

- (1) Undertake an extensive consultation programme within the district's senior schools, via a short questionnaire, in order to gather the views of young people on current and future provision, ensuring that it is made clear that the Council can only gather opinion and act as a facilitator.
- (2) Liaise with Rochford's representatives on the Young Essex Assembly via the County's Youth Strategy Group, in order to gain further insight into the views of the young people.
- (3) Provide the Committee with a summary report each October of that year's developments and activities in relation to youth provision, to include not only the work of the Council, but also the achievements of other organisations.
- (4) Officer meetings to be held on a 6 monthly basis involving the Council, the County's Portfolio Holder for Children and Families, Holmes Place, Warehouse Centre, StAR Partnership and the Youth Service to discuss relevant issues, sharing of best practice and contacts, together with identifying future funding streams. This would encourage all bodies represented to maximise promotional opportunities, in order to raise the profile and increase public awareness of the facilities/activities currently available.
- (5) Update by September 2004 the existing directory of local youth provision including services, activities and actual facilities. This can be used as a useful information service for the public but also for the organisations directly involved in the provision.
- (6) The Council's Leisure section to continue to research and apply for external funding/grants to enable greater provision of services. This would also involve assisting local groups with applications for funding.
- (7) Space be made available on the Council's website for information directly related to youth related activities, together with links to other relevant sites.
- (8) Continue to liaise with the police through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to deal with issues of youth nuisance where appropriate.

The meeting opened at 2.30 pm and closed at 4.40 pm.

Chairman

Date