

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 19 March 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **19 March 2004** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)

Cllr C J Lumley
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 Cllr Mrs T J Capon

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bourne Leisure & Contracts Manager
M Martin Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

t Walton Team Leader, Connexions

140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T Livings declared a personal interest by virtue of being Chairman of the District Youth Strategy Group.

Cllr Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of the StAR Partnership.

141 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

The Leisure & Contracts Manager advised Members that he would be writing to the Chambers of Trade to invite them to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Chairman welcomed Tricia Walton from Connexions to the meeting, who as team leader had direct responsibility for the Rochford and Castle Point areas.

Members noted the main areas of work in which Connexions were currently involved as follows:-

- It was a relatively new concept which provided services for the 13-19 age range, either through local schools, through youth centres in High Streets or by referral from statutory agencies or parents.
- Advice is offered at varying levels ranging from leaflets to personal advice with the aim of ensuring that young people are able to enter into society.
- They work closely with the StAR Partnership and Members were reminded of the PACT network, which would be launched the following day. Connexions would be providing child protection and drug awareness training.
- They hold a database of all local voluntary organisations and are able to signpost young people accordingly.
- Provision of personal careers advice in every school together with the provision of extra curricular activities and work experience.
- They have close links with the Youth Service, for example, for the Summer camps which are aimed particularly at young people who lack qualifications with the intention of helping them to build a portfolio and attain a C&G qualification.
- They maintain close links with the Police.

In response to Member comments/questions, it was noted that:-

- The Summer camps provided time away from home with the aim of building self confidence and self esteem and appropriate help, tailored to the needs of the individual. This could include, as appropriate, drug/health education, anger management. The young people involved work towards producing a “profile of achievement”. The camps are preceded by a six-week programme. The young people plan their day/evening activities as well as the final presentation ceremony and are then encouraged to make decisions about their future. Where necessary, they are provided with personal advisers who can offer more help.
- The camps are available to all, regardless of a person’s level of achievement and a balance of varying abilities on a course is preferred. Young people are recruited for the camps from referrals through youth centres, schools, personal advisers, social services, and the youth offending team.
- Tracking procedures for those who attended the summer camps had previously not been adequate and were now in place for those concerned until the age of 21.
- The camps were financed last year by lottery grant funding, and other funding streams were being sought.
- 500 organisations had been invited to attend the launch of the PACT network. Whilst responses to date had been slow, they did, however, consist of a good mix of organisations.
- Funding is provided both from central government and the County Council.
- Around 80 personal advisers existed in schools across the County. A personal adviser in a school could have responsibility for as many as 1500 young people.

- Connexions work with employers on the Entry to Employment schemes to provide modern apprenticeship schemes with an emphasis on vocational training.
- A 'Care to Learn' scheme existed to offer training to young mothers.

Areas of Concern

Members were concerned at the apparent duplication of services that appeared to exist between the varying organisations with remits to provide services for young people, particularly with regard to the volume of finances and manpower being collectively deployed. It was generally difficult to grasp a complete understanding of what is available and how it can be accessed.

Members were also concerned at the amount of bureaucracy, particularly at the County Council level. This could mean that the work of organisations such as Connexions and the Youth Service were also affected by this. The Chairman reported that as Chairman of the Youth Strategy Group for the Rochford locality he had not been made aware of the launch of the Pact Network or the recent young people's Citizenship Debate held within the District. The level of paperwork involved frequently seemed to take precedence over the amount of action provided.

However, Members complemented the work of the voluntary organisations and the launch of the PACT network, with its aim of gathering together all voluntary organisations under one umbrella. Gaps in staffing had resulted in a lot of pressure on the two permanent youth workers in the area, who were also faced with increasing amounts of administration.

Members requested details of youth organisations that existed at county and district level, together with budget and staffing levels. In respect of Connexions, the Leisure & Contracts Manager advised that he would report back with more details in respect of their budgetary and staffing levels and to confirm whether they had taken over completely the role of providing careers advice within schools.

Consultation

Members noted that in response to written consultation with the Town/Parish Councils around any specific provision at the local level for young people, 5 had responded to date. A response deadline of 2 April had been advised. Schools had also been approached in a similar way.

Rochford District Matters

Mr Bourne advised Members that he had met with Ms Burton, the Corporate Communications Officer and Mr Bentley from Holmes Place, the Council's Leisure Contractor around the recommendation of this Committee to investigate the feasibility and costs of producing a young person's edition of Rochford District Matters. They had considered it to be a very good suggestion.

The cost of production would depend on the exact nature of the publication. An 8-page publication with a distribution to approximately 33,000 households would cost in the region of £4,000 including design, production and distribution. Members agreed that it would be necessary to sell approximately 25% of the space in advertising.

Members agreed that the ideal time for publication would be annually around the June/July period. The most important aspect would be to ensure its appeal to young people. A strong element of visual appeal would therefore be necessary, including consideration of producing it on coloured paper.

However, it was noted that production of an 8-page document this year would pose real problems in terms of the timescale. The alternative would be to either produce a smaller version this year as a pilot or to defer production for this first year to the autumn. This would still be a good time to promote available activities during the darker evenings.

Members noted that there were various design companies that Holmes Place would be able to contact and proofs could be provided for Members' approval. Members would need to agree whether the document would be included as a pull-out supplement to the main newspaper or as a completely separate publication. If included as a pull-out, clear reference to it would need to be included on the front page of the main newspaper. Whilst the age range of the review was 11-17 years, it was recognised that the Council's activities for young people were from around the age of 8 and information on these would need to be included.

The objective would be to promote what is available, particularly during school holiday periods and to provide information about events. Mr Bourne advised that it should be possible to provide a summary of "What's on" in time for production this summer, with the aim of producing a much more detailed version for next summer. A mechanism would need to be put in place to monitor how well received the publication had been.

Members agreed that this Committee meet again to continue its review on Friday 16 April 2004, commencing at 10 am.

Recommended to Community Services Committee

That a young person's edition of Rochford District Matters be published on an annual basis at no additional cost to the Council.

The meeting commenced at 10 am and closed at 12.15 pm.

Chairman

Date