

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **9 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 Cllrs Mrs T J Capon and P K Savill.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bourne Leisure & Contracts Manager
M Martin Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

K Diable-White Acting Inspector, Rayleigh Division, Essex Police
M Hughes Divisional Youth Manager, Essex County Council

119 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

120 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 management team of 57 South Street.

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

The Committee welcomed representatives from Essex Police and Essex County Council to the meeting.

Essex Police

The Acting Inspector, with responsibility for Community Safety, outlined the role of the police in working with young people.

Members were already aware that youth disorder was of great concern to the residents of the district, but was certainly no worse than in other parts of the country. It is particularly highlighted in this district, as it has low crime figures generally.

During recent meetings of this Committee, when the issue of policies and services for young people has been considered, Members have been noting the many good facilities already in place across the District. The Police are of the view that a significant number of young people do not want “organised” activities. As such, they will therefore congregate in groups, which may lead to collateral rather than criminal damage.

Policing these situations is difficult as young people may be gathered in several different areas on any one night and the police may be called to respond to several instances of perceived nuisance. They have attempted to address this by overlapping the shift pattern across the time of peak demand. However, Members noted that the only way to provide a real solution would be to provide alternative places for young people to gather where they are not only safe, but where the amount of nuisance to the public would also be kept to a minimum.

3 Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) have been employed within the area, including Castle Point. Feedback from the community has been positive and a further 3 are in training. PCSO's have the powers to deal with anti-social behaviour and to be the 'eyes and ears' for the regular police officers. They do not have cars and whilst this takes them longer to be deployed, they do have the advantage of being out on site for the maximum period of time, when they can engage with the community.

An Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) is the ultimate deterrent, which can be employed. Currently none exist within this District. In response to Members' concern that this could be seen as a draconian measure, it was confirmed that safeguards were in place and the Police and the Courts would not be satisfied if the seriousness of the crime could not be evidenced.

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) involves discussions between the police, the young person and their family on the way forward and has proved to be a successful way of dealing with youth nuisance.

The most obvious difference is that the ASBO is a statutory creation, and carries legal force; the ABC is an informal procedure, though not without legal significance. Both types of intervention are aimed at stopping the problem rather than punishing the offender. Because the ABC is a voluntary contract, it has greater flexibility, while the ASBO, because of its more formal status, offers advantages in terms of enforcement.

The Home Office has given the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) funding for the next two years for an Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, to be based within the District. The individual should be in post

within the next few months. Further funding was available to provide some part time administrative assistance to the Co-ordinator. The co-ordinator role would be able to work at developing good relationships with parents and to pursue the ABC procedure. Partnerships would need to consider funding this post once the funding from Central Government ceases.

The Police fund appropriate schemes within the District, such as a scheme involving the Fire Service for those offending or in danger of offending, a teen facility in the Castle Point area and mobile skateboard facilities.

In response to Members questions, the Acting Inspector confirmed that the challenge for all partners is to provide areas for young people to meet which offer safety for the young people, as well as minimising the opportunities for collateral damage. The Teen Shelter in Magnolia Park, Hawkwell was cited as a good example. However, projects like these do require the support of the local community and Members commented that the public would need to be confident that a police presence could be summoned at short notice.

As Members had already noted, routine patrols were difficult when police were constantly being called to attend various gatherings of young people. If the perceived nuisance could be reduced, more routine patrols would become possible.

Members requested that representatives from the Chambers of Trade be invited to a future meeting, when the possibility of providing commercial ventures, such as a coffee shop, might be discussed.

Essex Youth Service

Mr Hughes confirmed that the Essex Youth Service is primarily an educational service which aims to provide an informal social education that will equip those in need with appropriate life skills. He outlined their service priorities as follows:-

- The core age group addressed is 13-19 years but they do offer programmes for those up to the age of 25, for example, through the Princes Trust and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and beyond the age of 25 for those with special needs and disabilities.
- The aim is to provide young people with the necessary skills to access employment.
- Reaching out to those who are socially disadvantaged, in order to ensure they have access to youth provision. They work closely with “Connexions” and Community Youth Groups to “broker” services for young people.

Their service strategies were identified as follows:-

- Youth Action - where young people get involved in formulating programmes of action, for example, the Hawkwell Youth Forum and the Essex Youth Assembly, with 2 representatives from the District.

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2004

- Equality and Cultural Diversity - which seeks to ensure that services are available to everyone, regardless of culture or disability.
- Detached/Mobile Work – whereby teams of youth workers can make contact with groups where they are congregating. A mobile unit has been purchased for the Rochford area and 3 evenings sessions a week are taking place. It is necessary to identify where further provision should be located. This is of particular benefit to the outlying areas of the District.
- Information & Support – leaflets and publicity around, for example, drugs, health, housing. This is particularly useful for referring young people to the appropriate professional agency, where specific support is otherwise not available. 57 South Street, Rochford exists as a key information centre and drop-in facility. Hawkwell Parish Council's Youth Forum meet there and youth work teams operate from there.
- Alternative/Complimentary Education – short burst programmes of 12 weeks, which address barriers to learning for those who have become disengaged from formal education for reasons such as bullying at school or problems at home. Attempts are made to look at mechanisms to re-engage the learning process in school.
- “Prison! No Way” – a crime reduction programme working in conjunction with the Police, Bullwood Hall, Hockley and Chelmsford Prison aimed at targeting young people to make them aware of the consequences of their own actions, such as loss of freedom and awareness of the victims of their criminal activities. It enables them to work through various issues, such as negative attitudes towards the Police and to bring about a greater awareness of the arrest procedure, together with sharing the experiences of those in prison. The Police will be working with partners to bring a programme to Rochford later this year.
- ‘U Project’ Summer Camps – internationally held as well as local. The Youth Service works closely with Connexions to provide these. They particularly target year 11 young people who lack qualifications and aim to raise their self esteem by explaining the options available to them and helping them to build a portfolio.
- Generic Youth Provision – Youth Centres currently exist in Canewdon, Hockley, Hullbridge, Rayleigh and Great Wakering, together with the mobile unit. This aims to provide an access to information together with social education programmes in an environment of fun. They work with various partners, such as the Warehouse, Footprints, Stambridge Youth Club, Hawkwell Baptist Church.
- Voluntary Youth Group Support – providing good practical guidance. The PACT network is to be delivered with partner organisations. The Youth Service will deliver training, support and advice on how to set up a youth centre and access support, together with the various safeguards that need to be put in place, such as child protection measures.
- Accredited Learning – working with 25% of young people across the County in the 13-19 age range. 60% achieve a recorded learning outcome and 30% an accredited outcome. An accreditation can be a valuable currency for employment.

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2004

Within the Youth Service in the District there is one full time team leader and two full time youth workers together with other part time staff, including volunteers. In excess of 100 staff are employed across the South division of the County including administrative and site management staff.

The Youth Strategy Group meets regularly and has increased powers to determine how to best deploy the resources within the District by ensuring they work with partners, in order to maximise resources.

The Youth Service has changed over recent years from offering a purely recreational service to becoming an educational service. Youth workers need to become better at promoting the services provided in order that young people and their parents are kept aware.

Additional funding for projects such as “Prison! No Way” had been drawn from Central Government and projects can attract lottery funding.

Resolved

That representatives from Connexions, the local Chambers of Trade and the Essex Youth Assembly representatives be invited to a meeting of this Committee, in order to continue the review of policies and services for young people within the district. (CD(F&ES))

The meeting closed at 12.07 pm.

Chairman

Date