

**Final Report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise:
11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy**

Purpose

1. To present the conclusions and recommendations of the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy rapid scrutiny exercise established by the Children's Services Select Committee. The exercise relates to a report of the Corporate Director for Children and Education, presenting the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy and proposing its adoption by Cabinet, included in the Cabinet Agenda pack at Item 7 (pages 37-78).

Background

2. In June 2011, the Children's Services Select Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise to respond to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation. The consultation response drafted by that group was subsequently endorsed (with a few amendments) by the Select Committee on 22nd July and submitted to the appropriate department.
3. The rapid scrutiny report to the Select Committee raised a number of concerns about the consultation process followed and recommended that further scrutiny be undertaken. The Select Committee therefore established a further rapid scrutiny exercise to consider two matters:
 - a) the consultation process followed for developing the commissioning strategy, and;
 - b) the report of the Corporate Director for Children and Education presenting final proposals for the commissioning strategy to Cabinet.
4. The Rapid Scrutiny Exercise was held on 9th September 2011 with the following members and officers in attendance:

Cllr Peter Davis	Councillor
Cllr Jon Hubbard	Councillor (Lead Member)
Cllr Jacqui Lay	Councillor
Cllr Helen Osborn	Councillor

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Richard Clewer	Portfolio Holder for Youth Skills

Julie Cramp
Henry Powell

Joint Director, Commissioning & Performance
Senior Scrutiny Officer

Summary of Discussions

a) Discussion of the consultation process

5. Following a member query, it was reported that the consultation results were analysed by the Voice and Influence team and these, plus the eventual outcomes, would be fed back to consultees.
6. It was reported that the age range of the Commissioning Strategy has been extended from 13 to 19, to 11 to 19, to mirror the age range of secondary (and further) education. Members expressed concern that not enough activities were available for 11 and 12 year olds as youth work tended to be aimed at 13 to 19 year olds. However, it was acknowledged that involving very young people in youth activities could discourage older teens from taking part. It was also noted that those younger than 13 are sometimes permitted to participate in youth activities and that local discretion around this would remain.
7. Members expressed concern that the Corporate Research Team had not been fully involved in designing the consultation process and drafting all of the consultation questions. Members felt that the questions included in the 'Commissioning Strategy – draft for consultation' were worded in a way that was inaccessible and uninviting to the average person and would not, therefore, have encouraged maximum response. It was noted that 31 seemed a disappointing number of written responses to a consultation in a large county. In response, officers and the Cabinet Member reported that the questions included in this consultation document were aimed at professionals involved with youth work and it was therefore appropriate and necessary for them to be of a technical nature. The consultation questions included on the Sparksite website, however, were intended for young people and were worded accordingly. Also, some of the 31 written responses were from large organisations, such as the Police Authority, rather than individuals. The Cabinet Member noted that simple, 'tick box' consultation questions requesting yes's or no's would probably have prompted a larger response, but would have achieved very little.
8. It was reported that two Area Boards had held special meetings to consider the consultation document and others received briefings at their regular meetings. Members expressed concern that some Area Boards had chosen only to have a Chairman's announcement on the consultation.
9. Members expressed concern that it had not been made clear within the consultation process that new campus developments would not necessarily be available (or include youth work) in all areas of Wiltshire. Members questioned how much relevance localised plans such as campus developments had to a county-wide strategy. Members also had concerns regarding the relevance of the campus programme to this consultation, given

the disparity between the timescales for making savings and the projected timescales for the campus projects. The Portfolio Holder for Youth Skills responded that the consultation was an invitation to young people to express how they wanted youth work to be delivered in the future and so it was essential to include the campus plans within that context. It was also reported that it was made clear in consultation sessions with young people that youth work provision in campuses was not a certainty everywhere.

Discussion of the proposals to Cabinet

10. The Director for Commissioning and Performance introduced the Cabinet report and summarised the proposed Wiltshire Youth Work Offer for members.
11. It was reported that in some local authorities youth work was now exclusively provided by volunteers whereas Wiltshire Council was able to retain paid youth work staff, while working increasingly closely with the voluntary and community sector. The Council's comparatively strong financial situation had also allowed the delay of the necessary cuts for one year while an in-depth review and consultation on services for 13-19 year olds took place.
12. It was reported that any subscriptions for access to youth work were likely to be a nominal amount and members were reassured that no young person would be refused access on the basis of their ability to pay. It was noted that paying small subscriptions can actually increase young people's sense of ownership over their youth centres and activities. Other methods of income generation such as corporate sponsorship and projects run by young people (e.g. smoothie bars) would also be explored.
13. Members expressed concern that there is the potential for the proposed Youth Advisory Groups' role to overlap with existing bodies, such as CAYPIGs (Community Area Young People's Issues Groups). It was reported that CAYPIGs were run entirely by Youth Services, whereas Youth Advisory Groups would be of a more over-arching nature. Each Youth Advisory Group would reflect the unique circumstances and requirements of its local area and that existing groups and bodies, such as CAYPIGs, would be involved in their development. The primary role of young people in planning and shaping services would be ensured by requiring each Youth Advisory Group to elect a chairman under the age of twenty-five and also for more than 50% of their members to be under that age. Members might also include councillors and community area managers.
14. The Director for Commissioning and Performance reported that the move towards focusing more resources on one-to-one work with young people engaging in risky behaviours could involve changes to the role of the Youth Development Service Team Leaders. However, this, and other decisions around staffing such as the precise mix of full-time and sessional staff and volunteers would depend on local circumstances. There would be voluntary opportunities across all areas of the service and all would receive appropriate

training and supervision. The framework for using those volunteers would reflect the Council's Volunteering Strategy.

15. It was clarified that each community area as a whole was expected to generate an average of £2,500 income, so areas of higher deprivation where income generation was more challenging could be 'supported' by more affluent parts of the same community area. Each area would also decide if and how to manage generating income from subscriptions.
16. The Lead Member thanked the officers and executive members for attending and answering the Rapid Scrutiny Group's questions.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. **The Rapid Scrutiny Group regrets that 11 to 12 year olds were not involved in the consultation until a late stage and fear that, as a consequence, their views may not have influenced the development of the Strategy.**
2. **It is noted that the Council's Consultation Strategy requires all consultations of this nature to be cleared through the Corporate Research Team and that, following a recommendation from the Children's Services Select Committee in 2010, assurances were given this would happen in future.**

The Rapid Scrutiny Group regrets that the Corporate Research Team were not fully involved in designing the consultation process and that the consultation document was consequently not hosted on the Council website.

3. **The Rapid Scrutiny Group notes that one set of consultation questions were aimed at young people (those included on the Sparksite website) and another set were aimed at professionals from the youth work sector (those questions included in the consultation document).**

The Group is therefore concerned that there were no equivalent questions designed for adult, lay people, and feel this may have partly led to the low number of written consultation responses received.

4. **The Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that it was not made clear in the consultation document that all the suggestions outlined for the future of a local youth work offer (for example, those including campus developments) would not be available in all areas of Wiltshire within the timeframe of the Strategy.**
5. **The Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that some Area Boards' participation in the consultation amounted only to a chairman's announcement.**

6. The Rapid Scrutiny Group welcomes in principle the idea of Youth Advisory Groups, particularly the emphasis on involving young people in planning and shaping local services. However, the Group recommends that existing groups and bodies within the local area (such as CAYPIGs) are involved in the formation of any new groups to prevent duplication, and that recognition is given to each local area's unique circumstances and requirements.
7. With reference to the proposed use of subscriptions for income generation, the Rapid Scrutiny Group welcomes the reassurance provided that no young person will be excluded from youth activities on the basis of their ability to pay. The Group also welcomes the proposal that other forms of income generation will be investigated.
8. Although 11 to 12 year olds are sometimes allowed to participate in youth services activities, the Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that there is no dedicated youth work provision for this age group.
9. The Rapid Scrutiny Group regrets the necessity to lose any staff in order to balance budgets, but also recognises the constraints under which the report was written. However, the Group does have concerns that replacing paid staff with potentially untrained volunteers could have a negative impact on the quality of provision.

Cllr Jon Hubbard – Lead Member for the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise

Paul Kelly – Designated Scrutiny Officer

Report author: Henry Powell – Senior Scrutiny Officer

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Appendices

None

Background documents

- A report on the Process for Developing and Consulting on the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy
- Commissioning Strategy for Young People aged 13 to 19 – April 2012 to 2015 (draft for consultation – May 2011)
- 13 to 19 Commissioning Strategy – Summary of Young People's Consultation Responses
- 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy (report to Cabinet 13th September 2011)
- Commissioning Strategy for Young People Aged 11 to 19 April 2012 to 2015 (an appendix to the above)