

Response to 11 – 19 Commissioning Strategy Rapid Scrutiny Report from Councillor Lionel Grundy

- 1 The Rapid Scrutiny Group regrets that 11 – 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.

Councillor Grundy: The draft Strategy covered the 13 – 19 age range. During the consultation, a number of people suggested that we should cover the secondary age range and the Strategy was therefore amended to cover 11 – 19 once the consultation had closed. However, some 11 – 12 year olds would have been covered by the consultation work that took place in secondary schools. Overall, 746 young people took part in the consultation and it is very unlikely that focusing specifically on the views of 11 – 12 year olds would have produced a different view on 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 was not fully involved in designing the consultation process and that the consultation document was consequently not hosted on the Council website.

Councillor Grundy: The Corporate Research Team comment on all consultation work with the general public. The consultation questions in the Strategy were aimed at professional staff that work with young people. The Snap Survey questions aimed at young people (as members of the public) were checked with the Corporate Research Team. The Corporate Research Team has been extremely positive about the written report on the consultation with young people and has stated that it is of a high standard.

- 3 The Rapid Scrutiny Group notes that one set of consultation questions were aimed at young people and another set were aimed at professionals from the youth work sector. 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.

Councillor Grundy: The consultation with adult, lay people was undertaken through the Area Boards. Each Area Board was offered a presentation to explain the Strategy and the proposals. Those Area Boards expressing a particular interest were offered a separate specific meeting to discuss the Strategy. There were 31 written responses but many of these reflect the views of a large number of individuals, eg, a single response sent by the Police, responses from Town and Parish Councils, a response from a special meeting in Melksham, and a response from the Connexions Service.

- 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 included campus developments)

would not be available in all areas of Wiltshire within the timeframe of the Strategy.

Councillor Grundy: The consultation was about the future strategic direction for the Youth Development Service and asked young people and key stakeholders about ideas/principles for the future delivery of the YDS. It was fully explained to young people at the CAYPIG meetings that campuses would not be available in all areas during the timeframe of the Strategy. Adults involved with Area Boards will clearly already be aware of timeframes for campus developments.

- 5 The Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that some Area Boards' participation in the consultation amounted only to a chairman's announcement.

Councillor Grundy: All Area Boards were sent a Briefing Paper and offered a presentation. Area Boards have local discretion over agendas for meetings. It is disappointing that some Area Boards chose not to have a full agenda item and that some Councillors linked to those Area Boards have then criticised the consultation process.

- 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.

Councillor Grundy: It is agreed that it will be important that existing groups and bodies within the local area are involved in the formation of Youth Advisory Groups to prevent duplication.

- 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.

Councillor Grundy: The Cabinet Paper includes examples of how each community area can raise income, and each community area will need to decide on how it generates income. It is good to hear that there is already feedback from one community area on the enthusiasm of young people to become involved in this work.

- 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.

Councillor Grundy: The majority of positive activities for young people aged 11 – 19 are organised by secondary schools, and the voluntary and community sector. In

most community areas, there is a wide range of sports clubs and other activities, such as Scouts and Guides, which are well-attended by this age group.

- 9 The Rapid Scrutiny Group regrets the necessity to lose any staff in order to valance 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.

Councillor Grundy: All open access youth work will continue to be overseen and delivered by qualified staff, sometimes in partnership with volunteers. Wiltshire's Integrated Youth Service has a volunteering strategy (developed in line with the Corporate Volunteering Strategy), and this is clear that all volunteers will be supported to work to specific standards and will receive appropriate training and supervision.