

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**25 March 2014**

---

**Progress Update:  
Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group**

**Purpose**

1. To present an update on the work of the Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group.
2. NB. The committee had anticipated receiving the task group's final report at this meeting, with Cabinet originally expected to take its final decision on the review of positive activities for young people on 22 April 2014. Cabinet will now take the decision at an extraordinary meeting scheduled for 15 May 2014. It is therefore proposed that this committee holds an extraordinary meeting on 8 May 2014 to consider the task group's final report. This will give the task group more time to consider further evidence and undertake a more in-depth scrutiny review. The committee would also have more time to discuss the outcomes of the task group's review in detail. If endorsed, the task group's final report would then be referred to Cabinet for consideration on 15 May 2014.

**Background**

3. On 21 January Cabinet considered a report proposing that it reviews how it meets its statutory duty to secure young people aged 13-19 access to sufficient positive leisure-time activities that improve their wellbeing, and sufficient facilities for such activities. The report set out a range of options, with a provisional recommendation to develop a community led approach, subject to formal consultation.
4. On 28 January the Committee established a task group to respond to the consultation. All non-executive members were invited to express an interest in sitting on the task group. The committee's chairman and vice-chairman then selected the membership to as far as possible achieve a geographical and political balance.

## Methodology

5. The Task Group comprises the following membership:

Mr Kaylum House (Young People's rep on the Children's Select Committee)  
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)  
Cllr George Jeans  
Cllr Jacqui Lay  
Cllr Howard Marshall  
Cllr Pip Ridout

6. The Task Group have adopted the following outcomes:

- a) Providing the leisure time activities that young people want
- b) Providing young people with opportunities to develop
- c) Ensuring all young people are aware of the activities available in their area
- d) Ensuring access to youth work and activities for all young people, including those from groups vulnerable to exclusion
- e) Ensuring safe accessibility to safeguarding and early intervention services
- f) Exploring the unintended consequences of any proposals
- g) Ensuring our youth workers have the appropriate skills and training
- h) Exploring opportunities for partnership working and other funding opportunities
- i) Finding the most effective and financially viable use of buildings for youth work and activities

7. So far the Task Group has met on four occasions and received written and verbal evidence from a variety witnesses, including Cabinet Members, Portfolio Holders, Area Board chairmen, VCS youth groups, youth workers and senior officers within relevant council departments.

8. The Task Group has also held a focus group session with 15 young people from across Wiltshire, including service-users and non-service-users, and representatives of the council's young people representation groups.

## **Initial comments from the task group**

### **General**

9. It was reported to Cabinet on 21 January that currently only 8 percent of the 13-19 population access the council's Youth Development Service<sup>1</sup>. The task group are investigating the accuracy of this figure.
10. The task group welcomes the extension to the decision-making timescale, but remains concerned at the pace at which the review is being undertaken.

### **Options presented to Cabinet**

11. The 21 January report to Cabinet presented four options for the future of the Youth Development Service, with 'D' being proposed as the preferred option:

Option A – Retain the current in-house service but reduce value

Option B – Outsource the service

Option C – Encourage and support staff to form a Public Service Mutual

Option D – Develop a community led approach

12. Because Option D is preferred, the task group is placing more emphasis on considering this in detail. However, it is also looking at the viability of A, B and C.

### **Option A – Retain the current in-house service but reduce value**

13. It is reported that this internal restructuring option could be to develop four hubs and these would take on a developmental role in the delivery of local positive leisure-time activities.

Initial comments from the task group:

- The significant reduction in staff posts would reduce the service's capacity. It would also make the required savings difficult to achieve and is unlikely to be sustainable long term.
- A four hub model could potentially diminish the use of important local networks and have a negative impact on young people living in rural areas without good transport links.

---

<sup>1</sup> Represents 3585 individuals covering the period 01/04/2013 to 30/09/2013.

## **Option B – Outsource the service**

14. This option would involve developing a new service specification and holding a competitive tendering exercise to identify and select a preferred provider.

Initial comments from the task group:

- Securing one overall provider would be difficult, resulting in multiple contracts which could prove difficult to manage. New providers may not have the infrastructure in place to deliver sufficient provision in rural areas.
- Option B could end up costing more for less overall provision due to potential hidden costs. Profit-led businesses might neglect the less lucrative areas of provision, such as rural areas.

## **Option C – Encourage and support staff to form a Public Service Mutual**

15. Under this option a service specification and contract would be developed between the council and the mutual, shaped by key stakeholders and managed by commissioners.

Initial comments from the task group:

- The skills and knowledge required to manage a youth service are different to those required to deliver youth work and this does not seem a viable option at this stage.

## **Option D – Develop a community led approach**

16. Under this model community areas would have an annual budget for youth activities, and would consult with young people to identify local needs and priorities and decide how this resource was deployed. This approach would involve the council moving from a direct provider of youth activities to an enabling role supporting VCS groups to provide activities using funding distributed by area boards.

### Budgets

- Under Option D, a youth activities budget for each community area and would be available for individuals and community-led groups to set up new youth projects. The task group welcomed clarification that this money will be revenue funding, ringfenced for use on activities for young people.

The task group are investigating...

- The potential risk that VCS groups providing activities for young people would decrease their fundraising efforts when more money is available directly through area board grants;
- The potential risk that area boards would spend the new ringfenced funding on youth activities, but spend their non-ringfenced grant allocations on something else, yielding no increase in youth activities but at a higher cost to the council;
- How appropriate criteria would be designed and enforced to ensure that the funding ring-fenced for young people could only be used for that purpose;
- The Integrated Youth Service uses a range of services provided by other council departments effectively for no fee. Could these represent additional hidden costs to VCS groups that will reduce the funding available for the provision of actual activities?

### **Strategic oversight**

- Under Option D, each area board would establish a specific sub-group to oversee the development and provision of activities for young people in their community area. The sub-groups would be based on the model currently used for Community Area Transport Groups (CAT-Gs).

The task group are investigating...

- What professional support and/or a defined parameters would these sub-groups need to meet this new responsibility effectively;
- The report proposes that 4 part-time Community Development Youth Advisors (2 FTE) would carry out this supporting function, with some additional support potentially being available from sports development officers. They would also coordinate Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) in all 18 community areas. Would this be a sufficient resource?;
- How VCS youth groups would fare if the current level of advice and leadership provided by the council's Integrated Youth Service was not available.

### **Targeted Youth Work and Safeguarding**

The task group are investigating...

- Whether the proposed structure represent a reduction in the capacity for preventative youth work;
- If there is a difference between activities for young people and youth work and whether both are addressed in the preferred option;
- If the impact of low-level, preventative youth work could be measured more effectively, without becoming bureaucratic;
- Given the scale of the county, if the proposed 8 Youth Support Workers be able to build substantial relationships with young people referred to them. Whether young people seek or accept support from youth workers with whom they have no existing relationship;
- If there is a risk that the 8 Youth Support Workers proposed would act as quasi social workers, limiting their involvement in preventative work;
- How access and participation could be ensured for those young people who are unlikely to attend more activity-based youth work provided by voluntary/community groups due to a lack of confidence or other issues.

### **Further points**

- The report to Cabinet states that some staff affected by redundancy could be reemployed by town/parish councils (or voluntary/community based organisations). Would town/parish councils be able to manage this additional responsibilities?
- Whether an alternative, workable and sustainable service model could address the concerns raised more effectively than the preferred option.

### **Proposal**

For the committee to:

17. Note the progress update and raise any further issues for the task group to consider.
18. Agree that, following an extension to the original Cabinet timescale, the task group's review should be extended and an extraordinary meeting of the committee should be scheduled to consider its final report, prior to referral to the Cabinet Member.

---

## **Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group**

Report author: Henry Powell – Senior Scrutiny Officer  
01225 718052 [henry.powell@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:henry.powell@wiltshire.gov.uk)