

Development of a Youth Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update Members on the progress of the development of a Youth Strategy for NWDC, and to agree a timescale for the consultation and adoption.

2. Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members

- 2.1. **Note the progress of the development of the Youth Strategy and agree the timetable for consultation and adoption.**

3. Links to the Corporate Business Plan

- 3.1. Emerging corporate priorities for 2006/07 include Youth and Equalities and Social Inclusion.

- 3.2. The corporate plan sets out clear aims for involving young people in its service delivery. Aims include:

§ To establish a sustainable voice for young people to influence decision-making and to feedback their needs, wants and priorities.

§ To recognise, value and empower young people.

§ To embrace and promote equality of access and opportunity within the communities of North Wiltshire and to celebrate diversity by responding to the specific needs of diverse groups and individuals.

- 3.3. A detailed action in the corporate plan that is to 'develop and deliver a Youth Strategy.' This includes approaches to the involvement and engagement of young people in the provision of services to and for young people.

4. General Background Information

- 4.1. There is no prescribed format for the development of a youth strategy, however there is much good practice nationwide to learn from. Research into best practice and existing strategies has directly influenced the approach that has been taken in the development of a Youth Strategy for NWDC.

- 4.2. At the early planning stages it was agreed with the Lead Member that if the strategy is to be integrated widely across the Council in order to affect working practices and also the development of an action plan, participation and ownership by all stakeholders at the outset should be encouraged.

- 4.3. In this case stakeholders were considered to be those services or teams within the Council. Essentially this must involve young people working with officers and Members to improve the services that the Council provides to young people throughout North Wiltshire.

5. Discussion ~ the Youth Strategy Working Group

- 5.1. In September 2005, an invitation was extended from the portfolio holder for Equalities and Diversity to all service teams across the Council who either directly or indirectly provide services to young people. Teams were invited to put forward a representative to work towards the development of a Youth Strategy. Given the importance of involving young people in the development process members of North Wiltshire District Council's Young People's Council (YPC) were asked if they wanted to be involved in developing a Youth Strategy. There was a positive response from YPC members, three volunteers were chosen to represent the YPC on the Youth Strategy Working Group.
- 5.2. The role of the Youth Strategy Working Group was clear from the outset, to steer the process of developing the Strategy. The group held its first meeting in October 2005 and have attended monthly meetings since that time.
- 5.3. It was recognised that there was a need to address the specific needs of young people in order to provide a safe, equitable and inclusive working environment both at the meetings and at any subgroup meetings that may be formed to address specific a tasks. To facilitate this meetings have been conducted in an open and participative way. There has been an identified gap in the levels of experience that Council Officers have of providing support to the young people. It has become clear that if young people are to play a wider role in assisting the Council to improve its services to young people, there will be a requirement to provide training to those officers who will be working with young people.

6. Progress to date

- 6.1. There are seven key elements included in the plan to develop the Strategy:
 - Stage 1** Preparation and scoping – identification of a Youth Champion, sharing of responsibilities, creating a vision of the strategy.
 - Stage 2** Review – overview of current youth provision within the District, placed within the national, regional and local context.
 - Stage 3** Identification of current service provision – qualitative/quantitative, social and physical accessibility.
 - Stage 4** Consultation – engaging with young people, seeking opportunities for young people to voice their ideas and influence decision-makers.
 - Stage 5** Identification of objectives – analysis of Stage 3 results in order to identify gaps and shortfalls in service provision, allowing priority objectives to emerge and form the basis of the strategy.
 - Stage 6** Preparation of the strategy and action plan – bring together work done in each stage and set of a framework for the future planning and management of youth service provision across the District.
 - Stage 7** Consultation and adoption of the Strategy – draft strategy to be the subject of consultation with the stakeholders and Members to ensure that consultation on issues relating to youth service provision is maintained. Provide a framework for monitoring and reviewing progress against an agreed performance framework.

- 6.2. During the past few months the corporate working group has explored various stages of the process in some detail. Key to the success of the work done by the group will be the ability to establish a method for turning the Strategy into actions aimed at meeting the Council's corporate priorities in terms of the involvement of young people. The emphasis of the work so far has been on using officers' knowledge and experience of their individual Teams and work areas to develop practical examples for involving young people in the delivery of services for young people. The expectation is to identify approaches to involving young people that could be adopted by Teams across the Council.

7. Timetable for the production of the Strategy

- 7.1. The proposed timetable for the production and adoption of the Youth Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 7.2. Members will note that the first draft of the Youth Strategy will be complete by the end of March. At this point the Strategy will contain the outcomes of the research and findings of the Youth Strategy Working Group along with a proposed set of aims and priorities. The content of the Strategy will have both an internal and external impact and as such will need to allow for a consultation period of at least 12 weeks. This consultation period is stipulated in the COMPACT codes of practice for consultation.
- 7.3. The consultation period will run until the end of June and will be led by Officers from the Youth Strategy Working Group, supported by the Community Partnerships Team. This consultation timetable will enable Members to consider the final draft at the Executive meeting in July before a formal launch as a part of the North Wiltshire Festival on July 21 and 22.
- 7.4. The actions to support the delivery of the aims within the Youth Strategy should be developed as a part of the Council's business planning process. Given the timescale this will in the main be for the 2007/08 financial year. Members of the Working Group including the lead Member will negotiate a number of priority actions that can be delivered as a part of the 2006/07 financial year.
- 7.5. The timetable for the work to produce a Youth Strategy has shifted from the original target agreed as a part of the 2005/06 Corporate Plan. This shift is the result of two major influences; the first is the meaningful involvement of young people through out the process, the timetable now fits well within the academic year and will enable continued involvement of young people through the consultation phase. The second reason for the change to the delivery date is the Council's adoption of the Codes of Practice in the Wiltshire-wide COMPACT.

8. Community and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. Partnership working offers opportunities for the Council to strengthen communities and service delivery. This in turn can help to ensure that community needs and priorities are addressed in a way that maximises the use of available resources for local people. Work with and for Young People contributes to strengthening communities and the Council's approach to responding to community need.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. There is presently a budget of £10,000 to support the involvement of Young People this budget supports the operation of the Young People's Council and related work. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report, however actions developed as a result of the Youth Strategy may require funding in the 2007/08 financial year.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1. The Council's approach to partnership working and consultation aims to be as inclusive as possible. The Compact and the associated codes of practice consolidate and reinforce this approach. The Council's involvement of young people in the production of the Strategy is positive demonstration of the commitment to involve young people in the Council's decision making process.

11. Human Resources Implications

- 11.1. The contents and recommendations of this report do not result in any direct Human Resource Implications.

**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIC MANAGER
TO THE EXECUTIVE – 9th MARCH 2006**

Documents used in the preparation of Report

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