

Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board

Youth Engagement Scrutiny

5 January 2010

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the progress to date of the scrutiny review of Youth Engagement and to consider the emerging conclusions.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the contents of the report and reflect on the evidence of the review to date;
- (2) Consider and comment on the emerging conclusions.

Details

1 Youth Engagement

- 1.1 At the Committee's meeting on 15 September 2009, Members agreed a scoping document for the scrutiny review of the Council's youth engagement activities (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The Committee considered that undertaking such a review could assist the Council in gauging the effectiveness of its performance and delivery against national indicators: NI 110 (Young People's participation in positive activities) and NI 21 Dealing with concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police.

2 Youth Engagement Scrutiny Review Progress

Evidence

- 2.1 All evidence gathered throughout the review has been circulated

separately to Members. It will form Volume Two of the final report. Key elements of the evidence are detailed below.

Background Briefings

- 2.2 During the course of the review, the Head of Recreation and Leisure, the Recreation and Health Improvement Manager and the Senior Recreation Development Officer attended meetings of the Committee to brief members on the Council's work in support of youth engagement.
- 2.3 The Chairman of the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group, briefed the Committee on the work and initial findings of this review. The review had set out to establish whether young people congregating on the streets were engaged in anti-social behaviour or if this was perception. In the course of the review the Group went on walkabouts with street wardens in Banbury and Bicester; met with members of Banbury and Bicester youth groups; and spoke to representatives of the National Youth Agency. Officers from the Safer Communities and Community Development team were involved in the review and provided evidence and advice on the type and volume of anti-social behaviour in the district.
- 2.4 The Task and Finish Group had concluded that it was largely a question of perception and that in general the young people congregating on the district's streets were not engaged in anti-social behaviour. The challenge facing Cherwell would be to promote this message and at the same time reassure the public.
- 2.5 As background to the review all members of the Committee have been sent a copy of a DVD: The Youth of Today, a film produced by young people in south Oxfordshire who have teamed up with their communities to explore the reasons for the negative perception of young people.

Field Work

- 2.6 In October 22 pupils from four schools in Banbury and Bicester visited Westminster to find out more about how democracy works. The visit was organised by Cherwell District Council as part of Local Democracy Week 2009. After a tour of the Lords and Commons, they had a chance to quiz local MP, Tony Baldry. He faced questions on young people being disregarded because they are not old enough to vote, the future of paediatrics at the Horton General Hospital, public sector spending cuts and MPs' expenses.
- 2.7 Also as part of Local Democracy Week schools across North Oxfordshire took part in the "I'm a councillor, get me out of here" on-line event. Four Cherwell District Councillors, including two members of the Committee, took part.
- 2.8 In November members of the Committee attended a meeting of the

Bicester Youth Council, to observe the youth councillors at work and to talk to them about their interest in local democracy. The Committee members were impressed by the commitment and mature approach of the youth councillors.

Question and Answer Session

- 2.9 Representatives from neighbouring local authorities and members of the Cherwell Youth Councils and the Oxfordshire Youth Parliament have been invited to attend the February meeting of the Committee for a question and answer session about youth engagement in local democracy.

3 Emerging Conclusions

- 3.1 The Committee will wish to consider and comment on the following emerging conclusions for inclusion as recommendations in the final report:
1. That although youth engagement is a discretionary activity with a limited budget and resources there is scope for the Council to do more through better use of the existing resources and exploiting existing systems and relationships.
 2. That the excellent work conducted during Local Democracy Week should be extended to provide a sustained programme of activities throughout the year.
 3. That the Council should do more to promote citizenship in the local schools and encourage greater involvement from those councillors and officers who were school governors or active in the school parent/teacher organisations. As not all young people are part of the traditional school system the same approach should be extended to all forms of further education.
 4. That the Council should appoint elected members to act as link/liaison councillors for each of the local Youth Councils to alert them to issues of interest to young people and to support and mentor them.
 5. That the Council should ensure that all of the Council's Heads of Service are aware of the work we currently undertake with young people and ensure that the involvement of young people is a mainstream consideration in their service processes and procedures.
 6. That the Council should introduce a formal policy for youth engagement.

Implications

Financial: There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Risk Management: There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

A district of opportunity

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Barry Wood
Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Scrutiny Review Scoping Document
Background Papers	
Youth Engagement Scrutiny Review Evidence Pack	
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Planning the scrutiny review

Engaging with Young People

<p>Purpose of Review Specify exactly what the Scrutiny Review should achieve and refer where possible to VFM issues of service cost, service performance and/or customer satisfaction.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider whether the Council has suitable mechanisms in place to actively involve young people. 2. To examine how the Council currently involves young people in its decision making, operation and provision of services, (including but not limited to consultation, communication and education). 3. To consider whether this follows best practice and is of a suitable standard. 4. To consider how the Council is contributing towards the promotion of citizenship locally and review the activities of Local Democracy Week. 5. To ascertain whether the Council is doing all that it can to ensure it is a suitable environment to enfranchise young people.
<p>Indicators of Success What factors/outcomes will demonstrate that this Scrutiny Review has been a success.</p>	<p>The outcomes of this review have the potential to improve performance and delivery against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI 110 (Young People’s participation in positive activities) This indicator is designed to measure young people’s participation in structured positive activities. What young people do, or don’t do, out-of-school matters. Research demonstrates that the activities young people participate in out-of-school have a significant bearing on their later life outcomes. Positive activities are a good use of young people’s time because they provide opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquire, and practice, specific social, physical, emotional and intellectual skills • contribute to the community • belong to a socially recognised group • establish supportive social networks of peers and adults • experience and deal with challenges • enjoy themselves • NI 21 Dealing with concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police This measure is also being employed as a proxy to measure confidence in local agencies to tackle the community safety issues that matter to local people (i.e. a measure of Neighbourhood Policing in the widest sense). It is an indicator of people’s view about those issues which are important to their quality of life.

<p>Methodology/ Approach What types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee based Q&A sessions • Informal meetings with local young people and attendance / observation at existing Youth Councils etc • Desk top review and interviews to identify alternative approaches and possible best practice • Observation of Local Democracy Week activities
<p>Target body for Recommendations Executive, Council, Other/Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive / Council • Safer Communities Partnership re NI 21 • Children's Trust re NI 110
<p>1. Key dates Identify key meeting dates and any deadlines for reports or decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept ~ Dec 2009 research and evidence gathering • 15 September ~ OSC meeting ~ initial discussion • 13 October ~ OSC meeting ~ possible Q&A session • 12 – 18 October ~ Local Democracy Week • 10 November ~ OSC meeting ~ possible Q&A session • 5 January ~ OSC meeting ~ draft report and recommendations
<p>Risks Identify any weaknesses and barriers to success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource constraints in CDC • Accessibility / availability limits for contact with existing youth groups • Making contact with 'hard to reach' young people and marginalised groups who are not currently involved with CDC • How to manage the expectations of young people • CRB checks and associated legislation.
<p>Witnesses/ Experts/ Site Visits Who, why and when</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDC officers: PfH, Strategic Director, Service Heads and Team Leaders • CDC councillors involved in Local Democracy Week • Crime & Anti-social Behaviour Task and Finish Group • Youth Parliament members • Bodicote Parish Council (has co-opted youth members) • OCC: Local (head) teachers and other youth workers • Attendance at Youth Councils held in Cherwell and other parts of the County • Observation at Local Democracy Week activities
<p>Publicity & Media Do we need to publicise the review to encourage community involvement? what sort of media coverage do we want? Fliers, leaflets, radio broadcast, press-release, etc.</p>	<p>Will this review be subject to a press embargo? No</p> <p>CDC press contact: Craig Forsyth</p> <p>Spokesperson for Scrutiny Review: Cllr Sames (OSC Chairman and Young People's Champion)</p>
<p>Resources & Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specialist staff • external support • consultation • research 	<p>Expect to manage within existing CDC resources.</p>

<p>Completed by: Rolls/Wild/Phythian/Clarke</p>	<p>Date: September 2009</p>
<p>Approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee:</p>	<p>Date: 15 September 2009</p>