

# MINUTES OF THE YOUTH SERVICE WORKING GROUP

Tuesday, 9 December 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Paul Bell, David Britton, Brenda Dacres, John Paschoud and Alan Till (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Alan Hall (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Jacq Paschoud

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liz Johnston-Franklin, Jim Mallory, Hilary Moore, Pauline Morrison and Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT: Rebecca Anscombe (Officer, Budget Strategy), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), David French (Chair, CYP Voluntary Sector Forum for Lewisham), Mervyn Kaye (Youth Services Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Kath Nicholson (Head of Law), and Warwick Tomsett (Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning)

## 1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin be elected as the Chair of the Working Group and Councillor Alan Till, the Vice Chair.
- 1.2 Councillor Till chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor Johnston-Franklin.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 The following non-pecuniary declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Alan Till – Vice Chair of Rockbourne Youth Centre's Supporter Group

Councillor Paul Bell – Lead for Unison on Co-Operatives, Mutuals and Social Enterprises

Councillor Alan Hall – Chair of Lewisham Co-operative Party

Councillor John Paschoud – Member of Sydenham and Forest Hill Youth Forum.

## 3. Youth Service Report

- 3.1 Councillor Hall outlined the context for the working group, reiterating that there would only be three meetings, that work could take place outside of formal meetings and that input would be provided by corporate finance and legal officers in addition to officers from the service area in question.
- 3.2 The Working Group discussed how they might approach the task of undertaking detailed scrutiny of the savings proposals and a number of options were discussed and debated. David French suggested that the working group needed to understand the vision for the Youth Service and what the Council wanted it to achieve before deciding on the structure to deliver it. Warwick Tomsett stated that officers had a vision for the youth

service, that the service's agreed aims and outcomes had not changed and that the proposals related to the model of delivery and how the vision could be achieved within the resources available. Prioritisation would need to take place, based on needs, but also on ensuring the right balance of provision in terms of activities, geography and timing; and taking into account other available provision. Councillor Paschoud commented that the working group, in addition to making recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet, might want to make recommendations to one or more of the standing select committees about areas for future scrutiny in terms of the longer term proposals for the youth service.

- 3.3 Warwick summarised the proposed £1.4m base savings for 2014/16 and the options for subsequent years (2016/17 onwards). It was explained that there were a number of potential options and that the results of the consultation on these would be reported to Mayor and Cabinet in February 2015. In terms of the base savings, the Council's statutory responsibility to monitor, track and support those not in employment, education or training (NEETs) would be unaffected; and alternative funding would be sought for the NEET traineeship programme. Alternative funding would also be sought for the specialist keyworker service and officers were investigating whether, in future, this scheme might be commissioned as part of the targeted family support service and paid for via central government funding for troubled families. Warwick stated that he was very confident that funding for the NEET traineeship would be found as potential funding for 50 per cent of the cost had already been identified; and that although it was difficult to estimate how much troubled families funding might be available for the keyworker service, this was becoming clearer with time.
- 3.4 The £1.4m base savings proposal would see a reduction in staff equivalent to 10.5 full time equivalents and the impact would be the cessation of youth service delivery at two sites (Ladywell village and Rockbourne) and a reduction in the capacity of the service to carry out street based outreach work. Although the capability to perform such work would be retained, if such work needed to be done (for example, in response to an emergency) it would entail a reduction in service elsewhere (for example closing a session early). Officers were actively engaging with other organisations and agencies to see how the sessions vacated by the youth service at Ladywell and Rockbourne might be filled. It was reiterated that the savings proposal only related to youth service provision at the two sites and not to building costs. In response to a question from Councillor Hall, Warwick stated that the possibility of reducing building costs via divestments was not being examined as officers did not want to jeopardise non-youth service provision at these sites. In particular, the short break provision at Rockbourne was considered very valuable and the building was one of only a few able to provide such provision. In addition, the Ladywell Village building was a Community Services Directorate asset and not a Children and Young People Directorate building.
- 3.5 It was reported that:
- Officers were looking at changing the opening hours of the Ladywell adventure playground so that this provision could potentially fill the gap

caused by the removal of youth service sessions from Ladywell village; and were consulting young people on this option.

- Alternatives for the Rockbourne youth service sessions were also being investigated and one organisation had already expressed an interest in taking over the slots.
- The consultation with young people on the savings proposals involved (a) providing a summary of the proposals; (b) having 'family meal' type events at youth clubs to explain the proposals; (c) consulting the young mayor and his advisers; and (d) using youth workers to explain the proposals to young people in detail and record feedback.

3.6 Other key points noted included:

- A 31 per cent cut to the commissioning service was proposed, although the amount of funding available would still be greater than that available in 2012/13.
- The redundancy payments that the Council would be liable for would not exceed £154k but the precise figure for this one off payment would not be known until after the restructure had been implemented.

3.7 A number of working group members who were unable to attend the meeting (Councillors Sorba, Mallory and Johnston-Franklin) had submitted questions and in response it was noted that:

- The terms of reference for the group allowed it to explore all options for the future of the youth service including providing the statutory minimum service and creating an employee-led mutual, *and anything inbetween*.
- The aims and desired outcomes of the youth service were set out in the report and it was not proposed to change these – just deliver them in a different way.
- Work on the re-specification of the specialist keyworker service and the targeted family support service would start early next year – the specifications for both services had a lot of cross-over and a formal proposal would be brought to Mayor and Cabinet in February.
- If the £1.4m of savings were not agreed, alternative savings would have to be found.
- Officers felt the income targets were realistic and that private organisations did want to rent space in youth sites.
- Rather than reduce the commissioning fund further and use the money to maintain slots at Ladywell and Rockbourne, officers were looking to find alternative provision to fill the gaps.
- The performance of existing provision would be thoroughly assessed when deciding which commissioned groups to re-commission next year, but officers would also take into account the need to achieve the right balance in provision.

3.8 The working group discussed the employee led mutual (ELM) option for the future of the youth service and it was noted that:

- Some preparatory work on the ELM proposal had already been carried out (staff had attended Cabinet Office workshops and discussions with staff around the proposal had been held) but there remained a lot of business planning activity to take place if this proposal were to be taken forward.
- On the whole, staff were excited about the prospect of a youth and employee led mutual, could see the potential it offered for carrying out work that was not possible at present, but were aware of the risks.
- Economies of scale, and flexibility, would be lost if some youth sites were considered for mutualisation and not others.

3.9 Councillor Bell was concerned that the Council did not have sufficient funding to set up an ELM; that it would lose control of the youth service; that it would be left with a large number of liabilities including pension costs; and that economies of scale in terms of overheads (e.g. human resources) would be lost.

3.10 **RESOLVED:** It was agreed that:

(A) The following information would be provided to the working group:

1. A broad brush picture of the vision for the youth service.
2. A detailed summary of the youth service budget and commissioning fund.
3. The needs assessment for the youth service and an impact assessment in terms of current provision.
4. Information on definitions of mutual organisations and on potential legal structures and funding arrangements.
5. Working papers on the ELM option (including Cabinet Office briefings).
6. Information on the other options available for the future of the youth service (and an officer assessment of their relative merits).

(B) Officers would consult Sarah Wiggins (Phoenix); Sharon Long (Safe Network) and Melissa Knight (the Sydenham and Forest Hill Youth Forum) on the proposals and report back to the working group.

(C) Detailed financial projections and modelling would be supplied to the working group, once the financial settlement has been received in January 2015.

#### 4. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

4.1 None.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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