

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Monday 14th May 2012 at 5.00 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting.)

Present

Councillors Lee Mason (In the Chair until 5.30pm)
Margaret Adair
Peter Eddis
Steve Wemyss (In the Chair from 5.30pm)

Also Present

Mike Stoneman, Strategic Commissioning Manager
Sarah Read, Positive Activities Manager, Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS)
Teresa Deasy, Local Democracy Officer

21 Chair of Meeting

As Councillor Steve Wemyss had submitted apologies for being late for this meeting, Councillor Lee Mason took the chair to begin the meeting.

22 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)

There were no declarations of interest.

23 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Caroline Scott.

24 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 March 2012 (AI 3)

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 15 March 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

25 Sarah Read, Positive Activities Manager, Integrated Youth Support

Sarah Read explained that the Positive Activities Service provides five youth clubs across the city.

It had been the previous practice to develop discreet sites for youth clubs but now the thinking was that they should be incorporated in other community premises. The youth clubs provide open access activities for young people at the following five sites:

Hillside Young People's Centre in Paulsgrove, the Buckland Youth Activity Centre at the Charles Dickens Centre, the Portsea Youth Club at the John Pound Community Centre, the Brook Club in Sackville Street and Hilsea Youth Club in a bespoke centre in the grounds of the City Boys' School. The Hillside Youth Club in Paulsgrove was currently in temporary premises while a new youth club and community centre was being rebuilt on its previous site.

A number of facilities were provided at the five youth club sites across the city including, two nights for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities at Hilsea Youth Club. The type of activities provided in the city include: various sports, judo, yoga, trampolining, street dance, handball and dodge ball. In addition, Sarah added that she was trying to get groups of young people to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. She explained that the young people attending Portsmouth Youth Clubs tended to come from disadvantaged backgrounds with minimal parental engagement in their education and extra curricular activities. Therefore, it was more difficult for them to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and they needed extra support in order to undertake this scheme. These young people often have to cope with difficult family issues such as domestic violence: therefore attending a youth club gives them the opportunity to avail of time with a youth worker for support.

Sarah went on to explain that a drama worker was employed to work with young people around issue based work; for example, a group of young people had produced a DVD on knife crime where they acted out a crime situation from the Police point of view including all the investigations. Other issues dealt with include bullying, drugs and racist behaviour.

In reply to a question, Sarah explained that the drama worker was based at the Buckland Youth Centre but he visits all the other centres. He was also involved in setting up the Care Leavers Ceremony every year. The school that uses the service most is The Harbour School.

The youth workers use the Common Assessment Framework which was a nationwide tool for all agencies to use.

Sarah gave an example of where youth workers would have to go the extra mile with a particular young person who had serious difficulties. In this instance issues involving his family, school attendance and learning difficulties a worker had to call to his house to encourage him to go to school. The youth worker achieved some success and later discovered that some of the issues involving school attendance related to bullying. This was another issue that they then had to deal with.

Councillor Eddis commented that the panel's evidence from groups of young people had revealed that bullying was an issue in Portsmouth which was perhaps not being recognised. Sarah commented that a significant number of young people in Portsmouth experienced bullying and cyber bullying was becoming more common. Nowadays there was more pressure on young people to look and behave in a certain way and this contributed to the prevalence of bullying. She herself had found, in talking to young people in youth clubs, that there was actually a pecking order of bullying. She added that she had introduced some ground rules in the Portsmouth Youth Clubs regarding behaviour and it was found that the young people appreciated having rules as it tended to make them feel safer.

Councillor Mason mentioned that young people from BME groups accessed the RANT Studio. Sarah commented that generally those from minority ethnic communities did not engage in youth club activities. However, the RANT Studio which was a citywide music project attracted significant numbers.

With regard to the shared use of premises, Councillor Mason commented that at the John Pounds Centre young people were not able to access football facilities there. Sarah explained that the John Pounds Centre was part of a trust which was set up as a money-making venture. However, considerable compromises were made in order to support young people in the area.

Councillor Wemyss arrived at this point at 5.30pm and took over the chair.

Sarah Read mentioned that the cookery sessions were very popular and surprisingly with the young males. She added that some young people were hungry on arrival at the centres.

Councillor Eddis commented that the cost of activities often prevented young people from accessing them. Many parents were on benefits and could not afford to pay for leisure and other activities for their children. Sarah was not convinced that young people would actually make more use of leisure activities if costs were reduced. She cited an example where a group of young people who were motivated had found the money for activities. This group organised a trip which was part funded by Portsmouth City Council but for which further top-up funding was needed. The young people involved organised the trip themselves and saved their own money to fund it. This was a learning exercise in that it encouraged young people to recognise that "the state" cannot pay for everything.

Sarah went on to explain that the youth service works with young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to motivate them with rewards for community work such as cleaning, gardening etc. In reply to a question from Councillor Mason, Sarah explained that the Police and Fire Brigade worked a lot with young people at the Youth Centres. Currently, they were working with the Fratton Frogs, a group who tour round on bicycles causing disturbances in different neighbourhoods. The Police have given the Youth Service a small pot of money to provide activities for these young people with the aim of changing their behaviour. Motiv8 is also involved with this project.

Sarah commented that links to other service providers could be found on the Pulse website. She warned that information put on Portsmouth City Council website cannot be guaranteed to have been checked. Other youth facilities were provided by King's Church, Cosham Baptist Church, Hope Church and St Jude's Church. The church groups were supported by Portsmouth City Council from the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) funding.

Panel members commented that there was very little provision on the eastern side of the city. They suggested that some facility was needed in the Baffins area. Sarah advised football had been provided at the Goals Centre but attendance had been low. She highlighted the need to publicise such events.

Sarah advised that during the summer there was a programme to take the Youth Service bus to Southsea Common in the summer to put on an issue based programme. Councillor Wemyss suggested that Portsdown Hill would be a good venue for such an event perhaps dealing with drugs and alcohol abuse. Sarah agreed to consider this suggestion.

Sarah Read advised that she was looking at reinstating detached workers so that they can deal with problem areas and sort out the issues and then move on to other areas. In response to a question regarding the impact of budgetary pressures, Sarah explained that the service worked with Staff and other services such as HIDS and they were also building up a volunteer service and this would reduce the impact.

The Chair thanked Sarah Read for her attendance at the meeting.

26 Dates for Future Meetings (AI 5)

As this was the last meeting of this municipal year and the new panel had not yet been appointed, members decided that it was not appropriate to set dates for future meetings.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

TMD/CB
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