

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE (SPECIAL) MINUTES

4 MARCH 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Sue Anderson

Councillors: * Tony Ferrari † Jerry Miles
* Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Varsha Parmar (2)

In attendance: Mitzi Green Minute 119
(Councillors)

* Denotes Member present
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

117. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Ann Gate

Councillor Varsha Parmar

118. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Item 3 – Progress Report: Implementing the Overview and Scrutiny Report 'Redefining Youth Engagement'

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his sister was a teacher at Hatch End High School. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

RESOLVED ITEMS

119. Progress report: Implementing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report 'Redefining Youth Engagement'

The Chair welcomed those present to the Special meeting of the Sub-Committee, which was held at the Cedars Youth and Community Centre. She invited Watford Football Club's Head of Community to give a brief talk about the history and programme of events at the Centre. The Chair also welcomed youth representatives from the following groups:

1. Harrow Youth Parliament (HYP);
2. Shaftesbury School;
3. X16 (employment readiness and work experience scheme);
4. Looked after children (CLA);
5. Flex Girls Youth Club;
6. No Limits (after school club);
7. National Citizenship Scheme graduates (NCS);
8. Users of the Cedars Centre.

Following this, the Sub-Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Families which set out progress in taking forward the 14 recommendations arising from the 'Redefining Youth Engagement' (RYE) review, which had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 May 2012. Officers highlighted the following areas of the report:

- Cabinet had noted the RYE report and had delegated responsibility to the Corporate Director for Children and Families, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families to develop and implement the response to the report, whilst working in partnership with relevant stakeholders;
- the 14 recommendations made by the Scrutiny Review Group were set within the wider context of the Council's priorities and the Government's 'Positive for Youth' agenda;
- the recommendations fell into the following three broad areas: greater engagement with the HYP and young residents of Harrow, mentoring

and positive activities and employability and volunteering schemes. The Children's Services Youth Development Team were working to enhance these areas and further details of 17 youth projects currently underway in Harrow could be found in the relevant booklet;

- it would not be possible to implement all the recommendations arising from the Review in the current economic climate. However, the Review had helped to provide a framework for future development, which the Council was committed to.

The Chair invited representatives from HYP to provide an update regarding the Harrow Youth Summit which had taken place in November 2012, where 6 of the 14 Recommendations had been further explored and debated. Representative members of the HYP made the following points:

- the Youth Summit had been attended by over 200 young people and others drawn from different high schools, colleges, special schools, the Youth Offending Service, CLAs, the NCS, Youth Employment Scheme, the Tuition Service as well as some voluntary sector partners;
- action plans, social action project hubs and pilot workshops had been highlighted for prioritisation. The youth action agenda should be supported and taken forward as these projects would benefit not just young people but the community as a whole. Young people were keen to become involved in social action projects, to gain experience through volunteering and set their own terms of reference;
- all of Harrow's Children's Centres should remain open and the young people using these should be encouraged and allowed to contribute to the planning and running of these centres, which would give them a sense of ownership. Members of HYP did not have the time or resources to take the lead on this and were looking to the Council to provide additional resources for this to be achieved. The recent expansion of youth provision at the Wealdstone Centre was welcomed;
- the upgraded HYP website had received a good response from young people but there was more that could be done to it. HYP Project Group had created an action plan and was working closely with website developers. Social Media, mainly Twitter and Facebook, are already active and facilitating the implementation and delivery of the other recommendations. The Council should use social media and the internet to disseminate information and to further engage with young people;
- HYP should be invited to take part in commissioning process in order to widen participation by young people and enable them to influence policy and decision-making by making it more youth-oriented and requested a meeting with officers from the Children and Families Directorate to discuss this and the possibility of receiving training in this area;

- It was important for the Council to reach out to young people in the borough rather than expect young people to contact them and the Council should create a database of contacts to enable them to achieve this;
- it was important that the council invest in young people in the borough through schemes and initiatives specifically aimed at them. Research had shown that there were considerable long term social and economic benefits of such activities aimed at young people, for example, a reduction in youth crime and better engagement in education and learning;
- teachers worked at the grassroots level with pupils and they, rather than head teachers, should be encouraged to nominate pupils to HYP and student forums. School assemblies would also be a good way to engage with young people.

An HYP representative stated that a youth version of the Neighbourhood Champions (NC) scheme would require further consultation among young people. Young people knew their neighbourhoods well and were regular users of local amenities such as parks and libraries and there was potential for a group of young people in a neighbourhood to act as NCs in tackling issues such as litter, or inadequate street lighting etc, but it should be noted that they were generally reluctant to report crime.

The following comments were made by other young people present:

- over 200 Harrow young people on the NCS programme had taken part in pilot social action schemes on completion of their GCSEs during the summer months which had been an excellent opportunity to meet people they would not normally come into contact with. They felt they had made a positive contribution to the community and spent the summer months in a constructive way and hoped further such opportunities would continue to be available for young people;
- young people should be afforded increased opportunities to become more involved with the Council. HYP aimed to represent the views of young people to the Council and hoped to build on links and further develop this relationship;
- HYP intended to go into schools to engage with young people, however, it was equally important for both Councillors and Council officers to do the same;
- social media discussion forums were a good way of both disseminating information to, and getting the views, of young people.

Following questions and comments from youth representatives, an officer advised that the Council was able to provide resources in the form of officer time and limited financial support in helping to further develop the HYP website. Funds had been allocated by the Council for 2013/14 to deliver

some of the other recommendations. Youth participation would be widened through forging links with school councils, social action projects etc. The importance of engaging with young people who had left school was also emphasised.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families stated that she felt inspired by the level of attendance and engagement by members of HYP and other groups and added that:

- the Council was committed to the youth engagement agenda;

the Commissioning Panels should be launched from September 2013 and a ring-fenced fund £70k would be available from 1 April 2013. This fund mainly comprised of costed officer time;
- information relating to the funding, how it would be spent and timescales would be communicated to all relevant parties over the coming weeks.

A Member of the Sub-Committee stated that there were many free resources available online which the HYP and other youth groups could benefit from. He added that the Council owned a number of properties around the borough and might be able to provide meeting rooms free of charge to HYP and other youth groups.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the decision of Cabinet on 19 July 2012 to delegate authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families be noted, and the programme of action set out in the Report and Appendices be endorsed;
- (2) the Sub-Committee would continue to actively enable young people to participate in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and encourage other Council groups to act similarly.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.10 pm, closed at 7.40 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUE ANDERSON
Chair