

Task and Finish Review

A Review into Provision of Facilities for Young People

October 2007



Taunton Deane Borough Council: Health and Leisure Review Panel

A Review into Provision of Facilities for Young People

Introduction by Councillor John Meikle
Chairman: Youth Provision Task and Finish Review



“This was the first ever combined Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council group of elected Councillors, Officers and stakeholder taking an overview of the needs of Young People in the Deane. During our meetings we had the benefit of other specialised inputs from the many individuals and organisations referred to on the following pages.

Originally our brief was directed more on the state of facilities and needs of more facilities for young people. However it was evident that there was a consensus amongst Councillors that they were anxious to discuss current social problems as they were affected by youth, and how changes in youth behaviour might re-align their young lives, and improve the quality of life of the community itself.

I will not attempt, in this introduction, to describe or explain the detailed recommendations that this review has made. However, it is sufficient to state that nothing can be done unless time, effort and, unfortunately, money is made available to deal with the issues raised in this report, and the recommendations we have made.

Local authorities have to ‘ration’ their resources in order to render its services to the public. The Task and Finish Group would draw to the attention of all, that the front page of every daily and local newspaper is filled with the consequences arising from the subject of this report. Resources must be made available to each authority and agency involved with young people.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who took part in this review. Your support and insight has been invaluable.”

Councillor John Meikle OBE

Chairman

Youth Provision Task and Finish Review

Why was this Review set up?

The issue was brought to the attention of the Health and Leisure Review Panel by Councillor Meikle and the Taunton Rotarians. They were concerned that young people were not being provided with the kind of facilities they both wanted and needed.

Terms of Reference

- That the Youth Provision Task and Finish Group should be jointly constituted by Members from Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council;
- To meet the need identified in the Youth Facilities Audit for Ward Members to input into 'what local communities needed';
- To recommend standards and provision for youth facilities based on the results of the Youth Facilities Audit;
- To propose some actions in areas of specific need, either through changing the use of current provision (such as school facilities) or through the development of new facilities;
- To make recommendations and policy suggestions to the Executive for consideration; and
- To consider the financial implications of any recommendations made

The Terms of Reference were modified as the review was carried out. Although some input was made into the Youth Facilities Audit, the review chose to look specifically at what specific opportunities and services could be provided to help young people avoid being drawn into the minority of young people who behave anti-socially.

Membership of the Review Group: the authors of this report

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Councillor John Meikle OBE
Councillor Alan Paul
Councillor Chris Phillips (until 3/5/07)

Somerset County Council

Councillor Claire Gordon
Councillor Steve Brooks (until 3/5/07)
Councillor Christopher Wolverson

Co-optees

Chief Superintendent John Snell
Inspector Roger Tolley

– Avon and Somerset Constabulary
– Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Experts who also supported the review

Rob Sampson
Jeff Brown
Adrian Spray
Andrew Hinchcliff
Karen Hughes
Lisa Redston
Donna Durham
Alastair Higton

– Somerset County Youth Service
– Somerset County Youth Service
– Communities First Partnership
– Connexions
– Taunton Deane Borough Council
– Taunton Deane Borough Council
– Taunton Deane Borough Council
– Taunton Deane Borough Council

Work Done, Key Findings and Recommendations

Supporting Local Action Teams

The Task & Finish members were keen to build on the work done by existing Local Action Teams (LATs).

It was reported that there were about twelve 'Local Action Teams' in villages and town localities which in varying degrees were actively protecting the quality of life in their own patches. It was made very clear to the group that Local Action Teams are a community-led initiative, and that they could not be imposed on communities that either did not want them, or were not prepared to take them on. On the other hand, LATs do not usually form without help from either the police or the local authority. It was also reported that many community groups carry out similar roles to LATs.

Recommendation 1

Communities and groups that carry out LAT functions but who are not formal LATs, should be supported. To this end, a list of all non-LAT groups that provide LAT services should be compiled. Ward Councillors, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council, and its partners can then identify gaps in provision that need to be filled.

It was reported that the major obstacle to implementing this recommendation was that support was not available to communities that wanted to set up LATs, required extra support to existing LATs. There is an LAT Coordinator for both the Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane areas, but this patch is extremely large, contains several dozen LATs and numerous other community groups.

Recommendation 2

That as soon as possible, a full time LAT coordinator be appointed to specifically serve the Taunton Deane area. This post should be community-focused and the post holder be actively engaged in helping set up new LATs, and supporting those that already exist. The salary level would have to be properly determined and budget made available, however it is expected that for a full-time post something in the range of £20,000 to £25,000 might be necessary.

The members were united in feeling that to stem Anti social behaviour, young people must be involved. Equally they felt that to be effective, there would have to be a full or part time coordinator working within the community - not office bound - to motivate groups all over the Deane area.

Engaging Young People

The review also focused on how to provide fulfilling and useful activities for young people. The members of the review had three objectives:

- 1) To strengthen networks between young people.
- 2) To develop what was termed “self esteem” amongst young people
- 3) To allow young people to take part in activities with a “positive risk” element

The reasoning behind this was that lack of social bonds between young people, combined with a lack of self esteem can lead to attitudes and forms of behaviour that the members of the review consider incompatible with the norms of society.

Schemes are already being run by Chief Superintendent John Snell, together with Taunton Rotary, Connexions, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and other monies to send young people a three day and night challenge course. Ten young people went on this particular course in 2006, and twenty-one in 2007. These trips include camping, trekking, abseiling and other pursuits that offer exciting and challenging experiences in an environment where risk is managed. The purpose of the three days is to help young people overcome and start shedding their lack of confidence and lack of self esteem.

These kinds of courses are expensive. Candidates must also be chosen carefully in order to identify those who will genuinely benefit. Timing and support are also important.

The County Youth Service made it clear that these kinds of outward-bound activities were not only expensive to run, but that support would be needed to sustain and help young people through them. Young people from chaotic or difficult backgrounds would need extra support.

Over two or three years the longer term benefits of this experience should be measured by targeting one hundred young people a year. Such a number could have an impact on the general social life of the Deane.

Recommendation 3

Where appropriate and affordable, increased outdoor and expeditionary activities should be made available, in order to develop and strengthen networks between young people in most need of them. This should be directly linked to the support and engagement strategies of Taunton Deane Borough Council and the County Council.

Better Co-ordination and Liaison Between Agencies

Representatives from the agencies involved in this review made it clear that better co-ordination and co-operation within and between agencies was needed.

The members of the review felt they could have an immediate and lasting affect on this issue, with minimum financial implications.

The work of this Task and Finish review made it clear to members that there should be closer and more productive links between the Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, and many other agencies including those named in this report.

The police were keen to offer the assistance of the Local 'beat officer' and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

Recommendation 4

To promote better political and organizational co-ordination within and between the County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, each authority should appoint a "Member Champion" for youth issues.

Recommendation 5

A permanent liaison body should be set up to act as an informal forum for ideas, experiences, and new thinking.

- It should meet twice or three times per year
- All areas of youth "provision" should be represented, from statutory service providers to community groups
- It should discuss common goals and feed back on successes and failures
- It should be a discussion forum and liaison group, not a steering group
- It should not be allocated any budget
- This body should be jointly serviced by the County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, and jointly chaired by the Member Champion identified in recommendation 4

The community should be engaged. The engagement of beat officers, Police Community Support Officers and Local Action Teams (LATs) was essential to the success of youth provision and the LATs were at a point where they could make an impact. The support of local authorities is essential to the success of the development of this service and in particular, encouraging Housing Officers to attend LAT meetings.

The Wellington Restorative Justice Pilot Project

Following a successful experiment in Chard and the creation of the Chard and Ilminster Community Justice Panel, Somerset County Council had recently funded a pilot in Wellington. The scheme brought the victims, offender, and Police together to find a solution for the betterment of the community. Statistics show that schemes of this kind reduce re-offending rates to approximately 4%.

It was agreed that the scheme in Wellington should be closely monitored with a view to introducing it in other areas.

Recommendation 6

County and Deane Councillors should be kept informed of the progress of the Wellington restorative justice scheme, and if successful, consideration be given to replicating the scheme with young offenders. The Scrutiny committees of the County and Deane should also monitor the pilot project.

Mobile Youth Provision

The provision of a mobile activity unit was discussed. The Youth Service were awaiting delivery of a minibus that had been fitted out for use as a mobile youth club. The cost of the minibus was just under £40,000 and it would be used as a back-up for the mobile detached team.

It was recognized that youth provision worked best when it was based within a community because of the feeling of ownership it engenders. However, a mobile unit could be beneficial in particular areas that had no useable facilities.

The group felt that the effectiveness of the minibus should be monitored before funds were sought to provide additional mobile units. The County Youth Service explained that mobile provision was helpful and productive, but that for any facility to be really useful it would have to be provided **in** local communities, **by** local communities, **for** local communities. Mobile provision that comes and goes will not engender faith, trust or ownership from the communities it goes to. Nevertheless, it does have a role to play.

Activities and initiatives for young people work best if they are done by and in the communities that need them. However, mobile outreach provision should be supported where it has a value.

Recommendation 7

The Scrutiny committees of the County and Deane councils should monitor the effectiveness of mobile outreach.

Conclusion

This review met three times, and never intended to find answers to all the problems and issues relating to provision of facilities for young people, what young people of different age groups want, and how to fund even the easiest and most obvious solutions. What the review did intend to do was have a sensible yet spirited discussion on some of the issues relating to the community, agencies who provide services for young people and, of course, young people themselves.

This review has made 7 recommendations, some of which have a significant financial cost attached to them. Others require some ongoing support.

In making these recommendations, the six Councillors and two co-optees who comprised the review group believe that they have identified and addressed some concerns, and that if the recommendations are adopted, positive, measurable results will follow.

The full list of recommendations is repeated in the appendix on the next page.

If you have any queries regarding this review, please contact either the Chairman of the review, or the Scrutiny Officer who provided research support for the review. Their contact details are listed below.

Chairman of the Review

Councillor John Meikle OBE

Email: j.meikle@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Scrutiny Officer

Alastair Higton

Email: a.higton@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Contact Address and Telephone

Scrutiny Task and Finish Reviews
Policy and Performance Team
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Belvedere Road
Taunton
TA1 1HE
Tel: 01823 356397

Appendix: Full list of Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Communities and groups that carry out LAT functions but who are not formal LATs, should be supported. To this end, a list of all non-LAT groups that provide LAT services should be compiled. Ward Councillors, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council, and its partners can then identify gaps in provision that need to be filled.

Recommendation 2:

That as soon as possible, a full time LAT coordinator be appointed to specifically serve the Taunton Deane area. This post should be community-focused and the post holder be actively engaged in helping set up new LATs, and supporting those that already exist. The salary level would have to be properly determined and budget made available, however it is expected that for a full-time post something in the range of £20,000 to £25,000 might be necessary.

Recommendation 3:

Where appropriate and affordable, increased outdoor and expeditionary activities should be made available, in order to develop and strengthen networks between young people in most need of them. This should be directly linked to the support and engagement strategies of Taunton Deane Borough Council and the County Council.

Recommendation 4:

To promote better political and organizational co-ordination within and between the County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, each authority should appoint a "Member Champion" for youth issues.

Recommendation 5:

A permanent liaison body should be set up to act as an informal forum for ideas, experiences, and new thinking.

- It should meet twice or three times per year
- All areas of youth "provision" should be represented, from statutory service providers to community groups
- It should discuss common goals and feed back on successes and failures
- It should be a discussion forum and liaison group, not a steering group
- It should not be allocated any budget
- This body should be jointly serviced by the County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, and jointly chaired by the Member Champion identified in recommendation 4

Recommendation 6:

County and Deane Councillors should be kept informed of the progress of the Wellington restorative justice scheme, and if successful, consideration be given to replicating the scheme with young offenders. The Scrutiny committees of the County and Deane should also monitor the pilot project.

Recommendation 7:

The Scrutiny committees of the County and Deane councils should monitor the effectiveness of mobile outreach.