

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **A REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SERVICE**

Date: 27 November 2008

Member Reporting: Councillor Mrs Quick

Contact Officer(s): Cliff Turner, Head of Services for Children and Young People

Wards Affected: All

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Community and Youth Service is funded to work with young people aged 13-19 years. The Royal Borough recently commissioned an evaluation of the Service from an external consultant. This report summarises the evaluation and outlines improvements that will be implemented. The intention is to re-structure the Service to move more resources to the front line by the end of March 2009.
- 1.2 The Royal Borough is committed to improving services for young people so that they are able to participate in a broad range of positive community-based activities that will help them to develop as responsible young citizens.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That

- a) **Members are asked to note the report on the Community and Youth Service and to approve the key actions to improve the delivery of services to young people in the Borough, including**
- **Developing of a youth service strategy for the Royal Borough**
 - **Consulting with staff on re-structuring the Service to meet current priorities**
- b) **Members are asked to approve a delegation to the Head of Services for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, to establish a joint officer-member working group and to bring forward further recommendations to Cabinet regarding the future of local management committees.**
- c) **Members are asked to approve the strategy of delivering outdoor education in future in partnership with the voluntary sector.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
There will be a broader range of positive recreational activities in which young people can participate. Youth centres will be open longer and more often. A range of youth work will be targeted to engage young people on the streets who may be at risk of developing anti-social behaviour.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 Government guidance regarding the development of youth work is set out in “Youth Matters”. The document is largely about ensuring that services are integrated in order to achieve for young people (aged 13-19 years) the familiar “five outcomes” of the Every Child Matters agenda: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.
- 3.2 “Aiming High: a ten year strategy for positive activities” was published last year. It envisages greater empowerment of young people to shape the services intended to benefit them and emphasises the development of citizenship. Local authorities are charged with leading these initiatives, although of course delivery is expected to be in partnership with a range of providers including the voluntary sector.
- 3.3 The Public Service Delivery Agreement 14 (PSA 14) has major implications for youth work. The indicators include
- Reduce the number of 16 -18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)
 - More participation in positive activities
 - Reduce the number of young people frequently using illicit drugs, alcohol or volatile substances
 - Reduce under-18 conception rate
 - Reduce the number of first time entrants to the Criminal Justice System aged 10-17
 - Schools, colleges and other providers at the heart of the system
 - Ensuring that other key public services support young people and their families
 - Ensure that there are robust systems in place for identification of and intervention for young people who do not attend school.
- 3.4 “Targeted Youth Support” is a new requirement of local authorities to ensure that young people who are known to be at risk of missing out of positive outcomes are specifically targeted. This means that alternative forms of youth work may have to be used to engage the “hard to reach”. It also means that the work of a range of agencies has to be aligned to ensure that there are no gaps or overlaps across the Royal Borough.
- 3.5 Youth work made a significant contribution to Best Value Performance Indicators and continues to make an important contribution to National Indicators. There is no doubt that the performance of the Royal Borough’s Community and Youth Service has been good in terms of Best Value Performance Indicators. These included targets about the number of contacts with young people, recorded outcomes, and accreditation achieved. Current targets of the Community and Youth Service reflect similar priorities regarding participation e.g. “the number of young people aged 13-19 participating in positive activities through youth work”, and the need to target groups at risk e.g. “the number of young people accessing youth counselling services”.

- 3.6 Clearly, the delivery of high quality youth services must involve partnership with a range of organisations such as the Prince's Trust, traditional uniformed youth organisations, and local special-interest voluntary groups. Connexions also has a key role to play not only in the provision of advice and guidance to young people but also in working with young people at risk of unemployment. No single organisation has or should have a monopoly of service delivery to young people. Local authorities, however, do have a responsibility to take the lead in co-ordination of the "youth offer".
- 3.7 The national initiatives outlined above, the Royal Borough's commitment to improve youth services, and the opportunity to re-structure services following the appointment of a new Chief Executive combine to create an opportunity to refocus the Youth Service. Malcolm Rittman, an external consultant with well established reputation in youth service management, was commissioned to undertake a review of the existing Community and Youth Service and to make recommendations about future developments.
- 3.8 Part of the existing Community and Youth Service delivers the Outdoor Education Project, administers of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and provides health and safety advice regarding educational visits (Offsite Visits Advisory Service). These three services were not included in Malcolm Rittman's original brief as another consultant had been previously commissioned by the youth and Community Service to undertake a review of these services. As it became apparent that the first consultant was unlikely to deliver the work he had been commissioned to do, Malcolm Rittman was subsequently asked to undertake a brief review of these services too. Two external reports, both by Malcolm Rittman, are therefore appended to this Cabinet report. Key points from both reports are summarised below.
- 3.9 Key points from the Community and Youth report are as follows:
- The opening times of the youth centres are very limited
 - There is limited targeted work with disengaged young people but a major focus on accreditation.
 - There is little evidence that the participation of young people has really had an impact on the nature of the services delivered
 - 11 buildings for youth work is a large number for a small local authority to maintain. The role and remit of the management committees varies.
 - The structure of the Service is no longer fit for purpose, administrative staff are not co-ordinated and financial responsibilities are not allocated to appropriate levels
 - Links with schools are poorly developed
 - The Youth Council is not functioning
 - Staff morale is low, recruitment and retention are difficult, and there is a lack of shared vision for the future of the Service.

- There is a need for clearer supervision and professional development arrangements

3.10 Key points from the Outdoor Education report are as follows:

- Health and Safety advice regarding educational visits is generally of high quality and is highly valued
- The work of the Outdoor Education Project is seen to be of high quality but because the service is small, the range of activities on offer is limited and the service is unable to hit its financial targets.
- Schools, both in the maintained and independent sector, would like to see the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme developed further and more consistently.

3.11 Arising from the reviews it is proposed to:

- Develop a youth work strategy consistent with PSA 14 and other current national guidance. This will involve re-focusing the Youth Service on contemporary priorities such as increasing participation in positive activities, reducing substance misuse, reducing the under-18 conception rate, reducing juvenile crime and reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Rather than operate as a discrete service youth workers will be expected to work with schools, colleges and other providers at the heart of an integrated system of support.
- Consult on the re-organisation of the Youth Service in order to adopt a more modern service with the focus on front-line delivery and a streamlined approach to management, administrative and financial support.
- Re-establish the Royal Borough Youth Council and ensure that there are robust systems in place for young people themselves to influence the delivery of services intended for their benefit
- Integrate the management of the youth service into multi-professional team alongside other professionals (such as psychologists, peripatetic teachers and educational advisers and welfare officers) committed to delivering good outcomes for young people
- Undertake consultation on enhancing the role of youth centre management committees within the Royal Borough to increase the influence of the local community and maximise efficient use of time and other resources in delivering youth services
- Increase the youth work commitment to working with those young people who are at risk of missing out
- Create a professional development programme for the youth service that enables youth workers to gain accreditation for progression in role

- Separate the responsibilities Outdoor Education Project from the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Offsite Visits Advisory Service.
- Consider outsourcing the responsibility for administering the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme whilst increasing the participation of our own young people
- Transfer the responsibility for youth centre buildings to Building Services
- Collaborate with a voluntary provider to expand the range of outdoor activities currently offered by the Outdoor Education Project.

3.11 Some changes are already in hand. For example, the current Head of the Community and Youth Service has been working with the Maidenhead Federation of secondary school headteachers to deliver a menu of activities for young people during the October “half term” 2008 and the February “half term” 2009. WAMSTER a website designed by young people for young people in the Royal Borough was launched on October 24th. This is one of the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act, 2006. A visioning day is being planned for December 2008 that will begin the development plan for the future of the Youth Service in more detail.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Risk assessment

The risk of doing nothing is much greater than that of re-organising and re-focusing the Service. The risks of doing nothing include continued recruitment and retention difficulties leading to a further diminution of service for young people in the Royal Borough. There are risks associated with change. In the short term there may be a higher turnover of staff and perhaps gaps in key posts.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1 This report has not been the subject of external consultation, but the external consultant canvassed views from a broad range of stakeholders (including managers, members and staff). It is on his reports that this Cabinet report is based.

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6.1 Oral summary to be given following the Panel meeting on November 24th.

7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
			N/A	N/A	

Background Papers: None