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| 10 February 2015 | | ITEM: 7 |
| Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee | | |
| Youth Consultation – alternative ways of working to support young people across Thurrock | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Non-Key | |
| Report of: Thurrock Youth Cabinet and Michele Lucas, Interim Strategic Lead Learning and Skills. | | |
| Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services | | |
| This report is Public | | |

Executive Summary

To enable young people to contribute and inform the decisions around proposed reductions and the potential ways in which youth activities could continue over the next three years, the August Cabinet meeting requested that the Youth Cabinet oversee the development of a consultation to determine current provision and what young people see as the key priorities over the next three years.

With the Council currently facing difficult choices around where services can be reduced the Youth Cabinet were asked to develop a questionnaire that could be utilised to ask Thurrock young people a range of questions to gain a greater understanding of where youth activities were needed and how to continue to deliver the youth offer across Thurrock with a key emphasis of ensuring that young people are in a position to access the regeneration opportunities that are available locally.

In September 2014 a presentation was undertaken with the Youth Cabinet outlining the proposed savings and introducing an alternative delivery model for youth activities across Thurrock. In response to this presentation a small task and finish group was established to design a questionnaire (See Appendix One). The Youth Cabinet set a target of **200** responses – at the close of the consultation **383** had been completed.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the consultation feedback be noted and the Youth Cabinet formally recognised for the good work they undertook in developing and analysing the feedback.**

1.2 That Members endorse the work of the Project Team, supported by members of the Youth Cabinet, to explore alternative delivery models for Youth Related Activities.

1.3 That the findings of the youth survey be used to inform services for young people.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 In August 2013, the Cabinet received proposals for a reduction in the youth offer across Thurrock; to ensure that young people's views were sought in making these decisions they requested that the Youth Cabinet develop a questionnaire to seek young people's views.

2.2 The questionnaire was developed by a small task and finish group of the Youth Cabinet and was signed off in September by the full Youth Cabinet – the consultation went live on 8th October 2014 and closed on 14th November 2014.

3. Youth Services Survey Findings

3.1 The Youth Services Survey was completed by 383 young people; the age range was 11-19 with the highest response rate of 19% attributed to fifteen year olds.

3.2 The highest level of responses came from South Ockendon at 21%, Grays at 17% and Tilbury at 15% with the rest spread across a range of other wards within Thurrock.

3.3 The gender split was 61% young men and 39% young women.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options. (Top Issues identified by young people who completed the survey)

3.1 Young people were asked if we should offer a more targeted approach to work across Thurrock, over 75% of the responses agreed that services should be targeted, in analysing this further the young people identified the following target groups:-

- NEET – young people who are not engaged in education employment or training
- Young people with a disability – many of the responses identified the need to provide more opportunities for young people with disabilities
- Young people living in poverty – one of the ways in which young people felt this could be addressed is by providing food in the youth hubs across Thurrock

3.2 The questionnaire also asked what young people believed the benefits were to accessing youth activities – the top three responses to this are outlined below:-

- Confidence – young people felt that gaining confidence and working as part of a team was a key benefit in accessing youth provision and that it was important that you learned skills which would equip you for work, the following is a quote from a young person accessing provision
- *“well where do we start, firstly the youth centre has helped me in building my confidence also it has made me a better person”*
- ‘Staying off the streets’ and keeping out of trouble, as well as undertaking something positive was a key benefit for many young people who completed the survey – the following is a quote from a young person who completed the survey
- *“Made friends. Stopped thieving”*
- Keeping active/healthy – many young people commented on this and the importance of a healthy lifestyle – the following is a quote from a young person who completed the survey.
- *“I think the youth centre is amazing, it helped me learn about drugs and alcohol and I did water rafting”*

3.3 The questionnaire also looked at what the top issues were facing young people in Thurrock, the top three are listed below:-

Lack of youth provision (lack of things to do, places to go and being bored – one of the many ways in which we are looking to address this is the up skilling of the local communities to provide a more universal approach, this has meant that we have offered a number of Level 2 youth work programmes to colleagues from the community and have increased the universal provision locally.

Smoking & drugs – initial discussions have taken place with the Drug awareness teams across Thurrock to look at providing a more systematic approach to raising awareness, this area of work will be discussed at the Thurrock Education Alliance to consider whether this could form part of the work commissioned.

Crime ‘not feeling safe’ with a particular reference in relation to bullying – this is work that the Youth Cabinet have been campaigning on – one of the solutions identified is more police on the streets, this feedback will be given to the Crime & Disorder Partnership to look at the strategic deployment and perhaps campaign around young people’s safety.

The final question looked at whether young people would be prepared to pay for some activities, the majority of young people agreed that they would be prepared to pay a small fee, but referenced the fact that if young people struggled to pay then this should not stop young people accessing services.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Youth Cabinet have developed a questionnaire that clearly outlines some of the key priorities over the next three years, and are supportive of the opportunity of taking youth activities out of the Council into an alternative model for delivery – this will enable young people to access high quality services and ensure that they are in a position to participate in and be part of the exciting regeneration agenda, with a view to promoting the Council’s key target of ensuring Thurrock young people access the future managerial jobs.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The Children’s O&S Committee wish to establish a task and finish group make up of members to support the development of an alternative model of delivering youth related activities across Thurrock.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The youth activities directly contribute to Thurrock Council priorities 1 and 2:
- **Create a great place for learning and opportunity**
 - **Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity**

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager – Children’s Services

With the potential to develop an alternative model of delivery for youth activities we would need to work closely with finance to look at a financial model going forward – this would include some financial modelling of services, recognising the need for the Council to realise the savings that have already been agreed by Cabinet.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Education Lawyer

The Committee is asked to note the report content, and make decisions that are within the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

In giving young people the opportunity to fully engage in the decision making around the current provision and the ongoing development over the next three years recognising the need to reduce budgets we have ensured that we have undertaken both the consultation and some focus groups attended by members of the Youth Cabinet. In the development of proposals we will need to ensure that we address the issues of engaging with vulnerable groups to ensure that they have the opportunity to contribute to the debate, this will be achieved by using a number of our networks within the community to ensure that we give vulnerable young people the opportunity to inform the decisions made around services.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 Questionnaire
- Appendix 2 Survey report

Report Author:

Thurrock Youth Cabinet

Michele Lucas, Interim Strategic Lead Learning and Skills