



DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

PROPOSED INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

TOPIC – HCC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES – WCC RESPONSE

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

If you wish to make representation on this proposed Decision please contact the relevant Portfolio Holder and the following Committee Administrator by 5.00pm on Monday 4 July 2011.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Lorraine Ronan, Tel: 01962 848 369,
Email: ronan@winchester.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham, Tel: 01962 838 235,
Email: ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

On 7 April 2011 Hampshire County Council launched a three month public consultation on proposed changes to Youth Support Services in Hampshire which, if implemented as set out in the consultation documents, will have a profound impact on the level of provision to young people in the Winchester District. This notice sets out details of the proposals and a suggested formal response to the consultation from Winchester City Council.

Hampshire County Council has to make significant savings to meet the reduced grant settlement from Government. Within Children's Services the non-schools budget was reduced by £4.9 million in 2010/11 with a further savings target of £15.8 million agreed for 2011/12. Of this sum, approximately £4 million has to be found

from the budget available for Youth Support Services, which represents approximately a third of its total overall budget. This will inevitably have a profound impact on the provision of services to young people in the District.

In addition to the need to achieve a challenging savings target, changes are also been driven by legislative requirements in the new Education Act and a desire to embrace the concept of the 'Big Society'.

The County Council launched a three month public consultation on 7 April 2011 asking for views on its proposals for a radical reform of the Youth Support Service. Copies of the full consultation documents and associated papers can be found on the following link:-

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/yss-consultation-2011>

The consultation period ends on 5 July 2011.

Relevance to Sustainable Community Strategy and Change Plans

Maintaining and developing access to services is a key ambition in the Council's Change Plans for all residents, including young people. Focusing on the needs of residents in the two priority neighbourhoods of Stanmore and Winnall is also relevant as two of the main youth organisations in the district operate in these localities. Another ambition in the 'Active Communities' strand of the Sustainable Community Strategy is for residents 'to lead active and healthy lifestyles by making good choices and decisions, for example by eating well, exercising regularly, not smoking or abusing drinks or drugs' - this is clearly relevant to young people.

PROPOSED DECISION

That Appendix A is approved as the City Council's formal response to the Hampshire County Council consultation 'The future of Youth Support Services in Hampshire'.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSED DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Detail

There are three main elements to the HCC proposals:-

- The development of a Youth Support Service (YSS) limited to carefully targeted work with very specific groups of vulnerable young people between the ages of 11 – 19 years (up to 25 years for young people with disabilities). Note: the current target age range for the YSS is 13 – 19 years with the same extension of up to 25 years for young people with additional needs. Proposed target groups for the new YSS includes:-

- Homeless 16/17 year olds
- Care leavers & future care leavers (i.e. 16 – 18 year olds currently in care)
- Those at risk of experiencing domestic abuse
- High end NEETs (i.e. not in education, employment or training)
- Teenagers who are pregnant or parents
- Young offenders or seriously at risk of offending
- Substance users
- Those at risk of poor mental health

It is envisaged that individual access to services will be based on a referral process.

- Community based youth provision commissioned from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – the ‘progressive universalism’ strand. For 2012/13 almost £2m will be allocated to Local Children’s Partnerships (LCPs) in Hampshire based on a distribution formula weighted according to the number of young people, deprivation factors and the level of rurality in each LCP area. The LCPs will be responsible for providing advice to HCC on which projects should be commissioned in their local areas and to what level. In order to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy it is envisaged that HCC will be the official commissioning body for LCPs and will carry out the formal tender process. LCPs will be provided with guidance and clear criteria by HCC to inform their recommendations. At the time of writing this report the guidance and criteria were not available but, as a starting point, LCPs have been advised that funding must be used for young people aged 11 – 19 years and expenditure should be consistent with priorities identified in their local action plans.

In order to stimulate capacity in local VCS organisations to provide appropriate youth services, HCC propose to appoint a team of community development practitioners (between 10 – 16 FTEs across the County). Their role will be to support and enable new and existing VCS groups to offer youth projects and to help ‘develop the market’.

- Careers advice and guidance (currently known as the Connexions service) is to become a ‘sold’ service which will provide independent advice and guidance for schools and colleges. Under the requirements of the new Education Act, responsibility for providing an independent careers advice and guidance service will transfer from the Local Authority to schools and colleges. Schools and colleges will have the freedom to buy the service from any suitably qualified organisation which may, or may not, be the Local

Authority. The original start date for the new arrangements has recently been extended by the Government from April 2012 to September 2012. HCC will underwrite the current service until then.

In terms of directly employed staff the implications of full implementation of the proposals would see a reduction to the combined Winchester and Eastleigh team from the current level of 45 FTEs to approximately 9 FTEs.

Potential Implications for Young People in the Winchester District

The implications of the proposed changes outlined above are significant. Support currently provided by HCC professional youth workers to detached projects, generic 'universal' community based youth work and sessional work in youth buildings throughout the district, will cease. In short, **all** general local authority provided youth services will be decommissioned by April 2012 at the latest. Professional youth workers currently support a range of youth projects across the District in Alresford, Bishops Waltham, Denmead, Wickham, Winnall, Colden Common and Micheldever, and also provide support and expertise to WCC officers with other youth initiatives such as those run during local democracy week and other one-off events.

From April 2012 funding will be made available to each of the LCPs to support services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations to young people between the ages of 11 to 19 years. LCPs have been advised that they should not simply re-commission current service provision but should take the opportunity to undertake their own analysis of needs and begin to establish new and innovative services that can be commissioned from the VCS. Projects no longer considered viable could be decommissioned as early as September 2011.

Members are reminded that the Winchester District is covered by **three** LCPs i.e. Winchester Central LCP (Westgate, Henry Beaufort, King's and their feeder primaries, Shepherds Down and Osborne special schools, Peter Symonds College and Sparsholt College), the '7AS' (Seven Alresford Schools i.e. Perins and its feeder primaries) LCP, and the Eastleigh LCP, which includes Swanmore College and its feeder primaries. Although figures are purely indicative at the current time the amount of funding that is likely to be made available to the Winchester Central LCP to support youth projects for 11 – 19 year olds is likely to be in the region of £73K.

Conclusions

Potentially there could be a 'void' in services to young people during the period September 2011, when some youth projects are de-commissioned and staff start to leave the service, and April 2012 when funding begins to flow through the LCPs.

Although there are many challenges there are also a number of opportunities for VCS organisations, parish councils, and Church and faith groups to develop a range of innovative and exciting new services for young people in the District.

It will be important to ensure that appropriate training and support remains available to VCS groups and that the processes to carry out CRB checks and other vetting

procedures are easily accessible. The Council needs to be assured that organisations providing services to young people in the District meet all required standards and are of the highest quality.

Risk management

There are a number of inherent risks linked to the radical proposals not least of which is the capacity of local VCS organisations to help fill the void left by the withdrawal of local authority run 'universal' youth services and indeed the stability of provision generally. This danger is exacerbated by the extremely ambitious timetable for full implementation of the reforms. The City Council can help by maintaining close links with the LCPs and contributing appropriate evidence (e.g. community planning findings) as the LCPs carry out their needs assessments, and by supporting our voluntary sector partners particularly WACA as the main infrastructure support body for local VCS organisations and convener of the Winchester Youth Person's Agency Group (WYPAG). The risk of not taking action immediately could be ineffective partnership and integrated working with the new arrangements and therefore poor outcomes for young people in the district.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Although there are no immediate resource implications for the City Council over and above the grant support recently approved to a number of voluntary youth organisations in the District, there will undoubtedly be a greater call on council resources in future years as the proposed cuts take effect. It will also be important to devote sufficient staff time to maintain a close and proactive relationship with the three LCPs covering the District, the proposed community development workers as well as existing and developing VCS youth organisations.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE PROPOSED DECISION

WCC Officers have encouraged Voluntary and Community Sector partners and users of current youth services to make their views heard through the consultation process.

Youth of Winchester (YOW – the district youth council) has submitted its own response to the consultation. In its submission YOW expressed concerns about a perceived bias in some of the questions. YOW also felt it did not have sufficient background information or understanding to make recommendations on alternative sources for the required savings.

YOW did not feel that LCPs were the right bodies to make funding decisions. However, if they were to be given that role YOW felt it was extremely important for LCPs to ensure that the views of young people were reflected in their funding recommendations.

YOW also felt that the needs of young people in the Winchester District tend to get neglected when compared to other areas.

Although YOW thought that all of the vulnerable groups of young people set out in the consultation were important, it identified the following three groups as being worthy of priority attention:-

- At risk of homelessness or involvement in crime
- In care
- Not in employment or education and training (NEET)

Soundings have also been taken from other WCC Officers.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

n/a

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

n/a

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

n/a

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision

Councillor John Cooper – Portfolio Holder for Communities, Safety and Public Health

Appendix A

The future of Youth Support Services in Hampshire

Response from Winchester City Council (WCC)

Question 1:- Do you think that what we have outlined in this document is the best way to efficiently use our available resources for young people in Hampshire?

Answer: - Although WCC appreciates the pressure on HCC Children's Services to make dramatic cuts to its budgets, and the consequent need to ensure that any remaining resource is targeted to those most in need, it does have a number of concerns about the long-term implications of the proposals and the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to fill the gap in provision in the short to medium term.

Question 2:- Do you agree with our proposal for providing targeted Youth Support Services?

Answer: - It would be difficult to argue against any proposal which aims to target those groups most in need of services. However any move away from prevention and early intervention provision, such as detached youth work, is regrettable and probably not cost efficient in the long-term.

Question 3:- Which groups of vulnerable young people do you think targeted Youth Support Services should prioritise? Please select three:-

Vulnerable Group	Priority
At risk of homelessness or involvement in crime	Yes
At risk of teenage pregnancy	
With poor mental health	Yes
Who are care leavers	
In care	
With special needs	
Not in employment or education & training (NEET)	Yes
Other (please specify)	

Comment: - This is an extremely difficult question to answer as all of the groups suggested above are clearly in need of services. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many vulnerable young people will straddle more than one group. The three groups identified above are considered particularly important by WCC in terms of their potential to have a negative impact on local communities in general.

Question 4:- Do you think Local Children's Partnerships are the right place to decide how to spend our available resource?

Answer: - Potentially yes, in time. However WCC is concerned that some (not all) LCPs are simply not at the right stage of maturity to carry out this task. The Council also feels that many LCPs seem to be focusing almost exclusively on a rather narrow school based agenda. In areas covered by more than one LCP (the Winchester District has three) it is difficult for other agencies to engage effectively with the LCPs. However, it is vital to ensure this wider engagement takes place and that clear lines of communication are established.

Question 5:- How should Local Children's Partnerships decide which youth provision should receive funding?

Answer: - Clearly any decision has to be supported by evidence of a clear need – many will have already been identified through a wide variety of community planning exercises so it will be important for the LCPs to be aware of and take account of these findings. It is also vital to ensure that commissioning decisions are not made in isolation.

Question 6:- Do you agree with the proposal to employ Community Development Workers, whose role will be to help and support local community groups to develop youth work in their local area, or could this resource be used in better ways?

Answer: - Before creating a raft of new HCC funded posts, has any thought been given to tapping into the existing community development expertise already available in District and Borough Councils in Hampshire and indeed through the CVS network?

Question 7:- Do you consider the County Council to be a good provider of independent careers guidance that schools and colleges would buy for their pupils?

Answer: - This is not a particularly easy question for WCC to answer. However, to the best of our knowledge it appears that schools and colleges in the Winchester District are generally happy with the service provided by HCC.

Question 8:- Would personal development work (work to enable young people manage their lives now and to develop the skills to manage their lives in the future) be welcomed as an additional service that schools and colleges could buy?

Answer: - This question is not directly relevant to WCC but clearly any assistance that can be provided to young people to help them manage their lives now and in the future is to be welcomed.

Question 9:- Do you have any other comments or ideas about how we could make the necessary savings?

Answer: - None that spring immediately to mind from the information provided in the consultation.

Finally, we would welcome any other comments you may have about how we could secure the best services for young people in Hampshire.

Comments: - this can only be achieved by working in close collaboration with all key stakeholders, particularly district and borough councils, but also parish councils and VCS organisations.

In view of the fast moving public health agenda and the transfer of responsibility to local authorities, it is important to ensure that LCPs are clearly aligned to their respective **local** Health and Wellbeing partnership boards.

The issue of ensuring that VCS organisations providing youth services have easy access to expertise, professional development and training opportunities is absolutely vital if we are to secure services of the highest quality for young people in Hampshire in the years to come.