

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (COMMUNITY SERVICES)

REPORT NO: DCS23

DATE: 9TH MAY 2005

TITLE:	CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE - PROGRESS REPORT
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	No
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	N/A
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Non-Key Decision

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Carpenter (Technology)
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Access To Council Services
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	None
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	This report is publicly available on the via the "Local Democracy" link on the Council's website www.southkesteven.gov.uk
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Consultation Strategy - 27 th May 2004

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1.1 The Consultation Strategy was adopted by Council on 27th May 2004. The Strategy made provision for specific consultation to take place with young people. A forum called Youth Engagement and Local Liaison was identified with the objective of meeting two times per year.

- 1.2 The Council has experience of working with young people and during the period 2001 to 2003 had worked with the Local Learning Partnership to facilitate events during the autumn terms with 16-19 year olds. The purpose of these events was to develop mutual understanding and to obtain their views about local issues. Experience suggests that the autumn term is about the only time young people have available in the school year because of competing demands presented by challenging timetables. In the main the young people that attended these events were from the Grantham area.
- 1.3 In 2003 (Citizenship Day) a visit was arranged for primary school (Year 6) children to visit the Council Chamber. This event was well received by the children concerned.
- 1.4 The work described above was led by the Training Manager with an input time of approximately 3.5 full time equivalent (F.T.E.) being invested in this work. Evaluations of the sessions were undertaken with the outcomes being reported to senior managers as appropriate. There is some evidence that changes were made to activity programmes at the Council's Arts Centres and Sports Centres and that these changes were influenced by young people following these events. In addition the environmental improvements carried out to the Boots Passageway in Grantham were identified following work with young people.
- 1.5 More recently the Corporate Director (Community Services) has partnered with the Stamford Police to access a group of young people (Youth Forum or YELL) drawn from the local schools to discuss local issues. It has been possible to obtain some useful information from young people about their concerns and experiences. Notes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2005 are attached as "Appendix A". A further meeting is scheduled for 20th May 2005.
- 1.6 It is clear that the Council could access young people during school time. Indications from Headteachers suggest that time exists within the curriculum under the headings Personal, Social, Health and Education but this work would need to be resourced using staff with appropriate skills.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **To note the work undertaken to develop a Youth Forum (YELL) in partnership with the Police in Stamford and to consider the issues identified in Appendix A.**
- 2.2 **To consider what outcomes Cabinet Members wish to achieve through engagement with young people.**
- 2.3 **To note that to develop this initiative may require additional skills and resources. The Director of Community Services to bring forward**

proposals about how resources may be allocated to this work following discussions with the County Council.

2.4 To agree that member representation on YELLS will be through the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

3.0 DETAILS OF REPORT

3.1 The report of the Russell Commission published in March 2005 identifies the importance of a society in which young people feel connected to their communities, seek to influence what is done and the way it is done, and are able to make a difference.

3.2 The purpose of Youth Engagement and Local Liaison is to try and provide an opportunity for young people to influence the Council. Moreover it is hoped that they will have the effect of building social capital. This means that by involving them we can help to build a network of relationships that help to build trust between people.

3.3 Research undertaken by Mori last October provided evidence that the general picture painted by young people is negative. A study of tabloid broadsheet and local papers carried out during a sample period discuss young people in the context of violent crime or anti social behaviour, with three out of four articles (71%) having a negative tone while only fourteen percent (14%) were positive and fifteen percent (15%) neutral.

3.4 In contrast earlier national research undertaken in 2001 indicated that 7 out of 10 young people would like to have a greater say in decisions about their community. However more than two-thirds of these believed their views were taken less seriously because of their age. The research is relevant because the Council needs to consider how it portrays young people through its activities as this may impact on the development of relationships with them.

3.5 Many Councils are increasingly involving young people in participatory projects. However the evidence from evaluations is that they are still having little impact on public decision making. The limited available evaluation and research evidence suggests that listening to young people has positive outcomes for them and their communities.

3.6 A commitment to involving young people is not enough for ensuring success. Evaluation of work in other organisations has identified a number of barriers to involving young people in making public decisions and some negative impacts if this work is undertaken inappropriately.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND ASSESSED

4.1 It is proposed to approach the County Council to seek advice and the practical involvement of the Youth Service in assisting the District Council in developing engagement with young people through YELLS.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Supporting young people to participate in local decision making is relatively new. For success to be achieved engagement needs to be child centred focusing on caring and listening, then action rather than just talk. It needs a semi structured approach requiring attentive listening and probing skills. It is important to have the time and resources to build relationships.
- 5.2 A major pitfall is to focus on the process of involvement rather than achieving outcomes and not being explicit about the goals to be achieved. Some of these goals could be improving perceptions, developing role models and increasing diversity.
- 5.3 The Council needs to be very clear about what it is hoping to achieve by engaging with young people and to recognise that it requires particular skills for success. Resources will need to be allocated to this work if progress is to be made in engaging with young people and this may be achieved in partnership with the County Council's Youth Service.
- 5.4 The Cabinet are asked to consider whether or not accessing young people during curriculum time offers the best approach for engaging with young people. If this approach is adopted then a learning plan will need to be developed with schools so that consultation is set in the context of learning about the role of local Councils.

6.0 CONTACT OFFICER

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YELL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2005

Following discussions with the Police a joint meeting was held between SKDC, the Police, a number of young people from Queen Eleanor School and the boy and girl's high schools in Stamford. (School year groups in attendance years 7-11). This was the first meeting branded as a YELL.

The following points were raised:-

- Anti-social behaviour was a major issue, each of the pupils outlined actual experiences of witnessing this behaviour for example stone throwing and graffiti and broken bottles.
- They raised the importance of clean streets and asked about gum tacking and whether or not this was a good idea. Recycling was an area that they would like their schools to take more seriously.
- The new All Weather Surface (Surfaced Tennis Court) was discussed and they were concerned that because there was no supervision it would get out of control.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of facilities for younger people for example the Internet Café has closed down and play activities were too plain.
- They explained their experience of intolerant elderly people throwing skates and skate-boards down the street when they are left outside of shops whilst shopping.
- One girl explained her experience of racism both in school and on the streets. She described how her house had been singled out for vandalism and attack. She had suffered racial abuse whilst going to school and playing outside.
- They discussed the general negative image of young people but understood that some 16-18+ year olds do cause problems on the streets with drinking. They said that there was a lot of negative newspaper coverage about young people.

The young people expressed a wish for more interactive sessions on crime prevention, firework safety and drug awareness etc.

Next meeting - 20th May 2005