

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: New Communities Portfolio Holder 25 January 2011
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(Planning and New Communities)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Purpose

1. To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to formally consult on the newly drafted Children and Young People's Plan (previously called the Youth Participation Strategy) Appendix 1, and draft Action Plan Appendix 2, for a period of 6 weeks from Thursday January 27th until Thursday 10th March 2011.

Recommendations and Reasons

2. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approve for consultation, the redrafted Children and Young People's Plan (previously called the Youth Participation Strategy) and accompanying action plan for a six week period, commencing on 27th January 2011.
3. The Plan sets out an approach by which all service areas can ensure that children and young people are given opportunities to be involved, informed and participate in the issues that affect them in their lives, including services and facilities provided or supported by this Council.

Background

4. The first draft of the Youth Participation Strategy was taken to Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 1st April 2010 and went through a formal public consultation process from 29th January 2010 – 23rd April 2010. Feed-back received from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, together with the responses received via the public consultation process highlighted a number of areas for further investigation and clarification in relation to the Strategy. Feed-back also identified the need for the Strategy to be a document that could be clearly understood by children and young people themselves, as well as parents/carers and all other members of the community. The document needed to be much shorter and explain clearly why and how children and young people should be involved and take part in positive activities. It became clear that a complete redrafting would be necessary in order to ensure the final Young People's Plan reflected all comments and feedback, and was fit for purpose and deliverable.
5. The redrafted and renamed 'Children and Young People's Plan' was presented, informally, to the Portfolio Holder and the Children and Young People's Champion earlier in the summer prior to the start of a series of consultation activities that sought the views of young people themselves. The Plan also included an action plan outlining how best young people should be involved, informed and consulted.
6. In June members of Scrutiny and Overview Committee, including the Portfolio Holder, attended a workshop to examine the Children and Young People's Plan, which involved approximately 25 young people aged 13 yrs, 14 yrs and 15 yrs from Swavesey Village College, Cottenham Village College and Comberton Village

College. This provided an excellent opportunity for young people and members to discuss with each other the newly drafted Children and Young People's Plan and action plan, as well as a range of issues that affected them in their local communities; members were also able to explain their roles and responsibilities to the young people and the variety of work that is carried out at the Council.

7. The Council also hosted work experience students during the summer and these students were invited to work on the Children and Young People's Plan, providing invaluable advice and feedback with regard to making the Plan more 'user friendly'. The students worked with colleagues at SCDC to produce a further draft of the Young People's Plan and this draft has been used extensively in further activities with young people.
8. Throughout August, September and October, an Officer has attended the Connections Youth Bus sessions at each of its 'stops' across the District. Young people that attend the Youth Bus have also been asked for their views on the current draft of the Children and Young People's Plan. The Connections Youth Bus also has a Youth Forum, whose membership includes a young person from each village it visits and who have provided feedback on the Children and Young People's Plan.
9. Two young people who had worked on the final draft of the plan presented it to Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 6th January 2011.

Considerations

10. During the drafting of the new Children and Young People's Plan it became clear that young people do not feel that they are listened to and that their views are not sought for a variety of decisions that are made about them, on their behalf, or about the things that affect them in their lives:
 - (a) Young people are generally very concerned about the things that happen in their local areas (ie, new play/recreation equipment, sports/community/youth facilities, anti social behaviour, more houses being built in their village) and would like to have a say in how these are planned and managed.
 - (b) Young people are also concerned about things that affect the District and County in general such as transport, reduction in carbon emissions, recycling, climate change, education, employment opportunities and growth areas and would also like to have a say in how these are planned and managed.
 - (c) Young people have made some very useful suggestions as to different ways of doing things and have made excellent contributions throughout this informal consultation period. Perhaps most importantly, young people have suggested ways in which the Council could involve them and keep them informed about things that affect them and how best they can express their views.

Implications

11. There would be minimal financial implications involved and minimal risk involved in implementing the Children and Young People's Plan and Action Plan if the use of social media mechanisms is permitted. All of the young people that have been involved in putting together this Plan and action plan have access to the internet and social networking facilities such as Facebook, and regularly use Twitter and websites to find out information and share their views on a range of different issues (schools, bus time tables, social activities). Social media is also regularly accessed by children

and young people that are historically difficult to reach, including those not in main stream education, with different cultural backgrounds, etc.

12. Similarly, there are a number of services and activities involving children and young people that are already in place. We should be strengthening those links and exploiting those opportunities to have more face to face contact with the children and young people across the District. For instance facilities such as the Connections Youth Bus could visit either more frequently or to another village and be used to seek the views of children and young people on a range of matters including planning applications, major growth sites, S106 monies, a range of local issues, etc. Building on existing partnership working with the County Council and City Council via the Children's Trust and City and South Cambs Area Partnership would also enable us to tap into existing resources to reach as wide an audience of children and young people as possible, and ensure a consistent approach is maintained.

13.

Financial	Minimal – costs outlined in Action Plan
Legal	Safeguarding Children
Staffing	Officer time – outlined in Action Plan
Risk Management	Not taking forward this Plan risks disengagement of children and young people, lack of commitment to work with whole communities, not meeting aims of Strategic Partnerships (Children's Trust, Area Partnerships, etc)
Equal Opportunities	EQIA in place
Climate Change	Early engagement and involvement of children and young people in climate change activities, behaviour and lifestyle changes, etc.

Consultations

14. Consultation have taken place as outlined in the 'background' information:
- a. Young People from Swavesey, Cottenham and Comberton Village Colleges
 - b. Young People from Longstanton, Oakington, Willingham, Haslingfield, Fen Drayton, Impington and Orwell
 - c. Young People from the Connections Youth Bus Youth Forum Committee
 - d. Children and Young People's Champion
 - e. New Communities Portfolio Holder
 - f. Scrutiny and Overview Committee
 - g. Connections Youth Bus Team
 - h. County Council's Children and Young People's Service
 - i. South Cambs and City Local Area Partnership

15. It is important to note that the Connections Youth Bus continues to extend its visiting areas and, as such, continues to seek the views of children and young people on the Children and Young People's Plan. At each 'activity' organised for young people, Officers ensure as far as is possible, that the views of young people are sought.

Effect on Strategic Aims

16. The endorsement of the Children and Young People's Plan would enable young people to see how they can contribute to each of the Council's key actions for 2010/2011 in some way, as well as future key priorities for the Council, and would ensure commitment from young people to work with their local communities to ensure:

- Continued increase in numbers of teenagers taking part in positive activities
- Maximising funding and resources by targeting funds at activities, facilities and services that are what children and young people want and will access.
- Meeting and surpassing a 65% recycling and composting rate by 2012; young people can make, and have made, excellent contributions in terms of ideas and willingness to help in relation to recycling and composting.
- There is a high level of interest from young people in the environment and they have made some very useful suggestions as to maximising energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
- Young people are the future of the District of South Cambridgeshire and investment now in their learning and participation will ensure a continued legacy of South Cambridgeshire being a place that is safe, health and in which residents can feel proud to live.
- Young people can make an active contribution in relation to improving and maintaining the appearance of villages, especially if their views are sought as to how best they could be involved.

Conclusions / Summary

17. The final version of the Children and Young People's Plan has been put together following extensive consultation with young people. The feedback received is that it is relevant and meaningful to children, young people, their families and carers, and is easily understood and accessible. The Action Plan that accompanies the Children and Young People's Plan should be a 'live' document that is regularly reviewed to ensure that the Council is up-to-date with latest technologies, activities, views and opinions of children and young people; this will enable informed decision-making, appropriate and efficient use of resources and better targeting of funding.
18. The recommendation to approve for consultation the Children and Young People's Plan would mean young people across the District would be actively participating in decision-making processes about the things that affect them in their lives. Young people are more likely to stay in education before going on to employment if they have taken an active part in community life and are less likely to take part in anti social behaviours. A range of activities are already in place for children and young people although these tend to be adult led and organised. Greater commitment and 'buy-in' from young people can only bring wider benefits to local communities and the district as a whole with adults, older people and children and young people working together to influence decision-making and shape their futures.

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Appendix 1 – Children and Young Person's Plan

Appendix 2 – Draft Action Plan

Appendix 3 – Participation levels by young people 2010 – 2011