

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**PRESENT:** Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair); Councillor Ifty Choudary (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Jenny Conroy and Jamie Lane

Co-Optees: Phil Houston National Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC), Adrian Bell (Connexions), Gordon Stewart (Children and Young People's Services, NCC)

Peter Strachan – Neighbourhood Co-ordinator

Lawrence Kay – Senior Sports Development officer

Morcea Walker – Children & Young Peoples Service (NCC)

Gareth Nichol – Young Ambassador

Tracy Tiff - Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Jackie Grady – Overview and Scrutiny Admin Support Officer

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Christopher Malpas and Councillor Pam Varnsvery.

### 2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 were agreed as a true and correct record.

### 3. **DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES**

There were none.

### 4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)**

There were none.

### 5. **REVIEW – FACILITIES FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

The Chair reminded the Committee that this topic was the issue that received the most votes in the ballot held during Local Democracy week. The Review is now at the evidence gathering stage.

Mr Gordon Stewart, Children and Young People's Services, NCC addressed the Committee.

He commented that he is delighted this Review was taking place to identify the gaps for access to facilities for young people and that it fits in with the targets for sports agendas. There is a need to ensure all Local Authorities and partners think more positively. There is a survey currently being conducted to publish a Youth Offer for media and youth as to what age can access the website, this links to issues such as locality required to deliver this offer. It is currently in the development

phase.

Mr Stewart was thanked for his address.

Mr Phil Houston, Northampton Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC), addressed the Committee.

He commented that the majority of organisers that run clubs that feed into his organisation are volunteers. He confirmed he would provide details of these clubs to help inform the Review. He supported the need to identify gaps so that facilities for all people can be publicised. Mr Houston is also a member of the Northampton Voluntary Youth Organisation and will make contact to ascertain the types of facilities provided.

Mr Houston was thanked for his address.

Mr Peter Strachan spoke on behalf of Neighbourhood Management.

He commented that the Neighbourhood Management is a partnership that brings together representatives of local associations. Peter Strachan advised that there is a programme of activity for short term funding. He added that there are a lot of activities available for youngsters who have been 'in trouble' but there is a lack of provision for facilities/activities in respect of arts and crafts. There is also a gap for activities for girls.

The Committee posed the following questions to Mr Strachan and received the following answers.

**How does this Review relate to your work?**

Neighbourhood Management has been successful in obtaining funding. There is a need for something more systematic.

**Is a physical building the way forward? What 'people facilities' are available?**

The building is definitely most important, such as cafes, open spaces for training, support from Connexions is also important.

**From the survey what were youngsters most attracted to?**

The facility should be free and young people should be able to drop in at any time.

Mr Strachan was thanked for his address.

Mr Gareth Nichol gave the following address.

He stated that he had been trying to locate suitable facilities for young people for the past 2½ years. The consultation had identified that 75% of young people would be interested in more facilities but that 25% of the facilities already available in Northampton are not good. He is trying to acquire funding and a building in the town centre which

would be targeted at those groups in education, but would offer to help everyone not just those targeted.

Mr Nichol was thanked for his comments.

Mr Adrian Bell, Chief Executive, Connexions addressed the Committee.

He advised caution regarding the consultation referred to by Gareth Nichol. He advised that Gareth Nichol is now a Young Ambassador who had written to Adult Ambassadors, gained a lot of support but action is needed based on the ideas that the young people submitted.

- The Committee then discussed the provision currently available, together with any background details:-
- An historic overview of the Youth work and what it entailed was given. During the early 1980's there was a political change and young people were not interested in going to Youth Clubs, centre based facilities were either moved or closed. Once young people know that the facility is free or cheap they do flock to it
- Interaction between youth workers and youngsters is better as they now learn about relationships, drugs etc.
- Games and activities plan for young people works well.
- There is a very limited number of Youth Clubs in this Borough as community association buildings closed their youth sections as lack of staff.
- A centrally based office would be more effective but could be problematical, as it would cost more.
- Some community centres are not user friendly.
- West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC) had shown a keen interest in developing this area and advised that funding was available although not guaranteed.
- Consulting is very valuable along with research for Northampton. Many facilities are on the outskirts of Northampton. It would appear that young people want to go back to the root of where they feel safe and comfortable. Youth clubs are a priority. Quite critical at the moment for community cohesion, keen to look across the entire spectrum.
- When youngsters are taken out of their communities the problems are less.

Mr Lawrence Kay, Senior Sports Development Officer, NBC, addressed the Committee.

He stated that facilities for 13 – 19 year olds are not well catered for in Northampton. Certain activities had been organised but numbers were low. The age group is a challenge and work is carried out closely with the Youth Forum. The Group Sport for Youth does give them a platform on sport facilities etc, NBC does try to give support to their ideas. Sports Development is currently working closely with youth in the Eastfield and Spencer areas and have set up two youth groups but numbers are low. There is a website although hits are low, also social

networking on Facebook pages is in place so that we can connect with this younger age group. He added that Sports Development is making inroads, focussing on activities and spotting the gaps, working with the Neighbourhood Partnerships. The minimum age to access Face book is 14.

Mr Kay was thanked for his address.

It was noted that there are issues in Northampton as to how schools are constituted and an interest of availability of space within schools.

In response to the Chair's query whether there are any physical facilities available in schools, he was advised that physical facilities is an ongoing project as trying to understand what services and activities are available. This will support learning and could link with young peoples' ambitions.

The Group made suggestions for further evidence gathering methods:-

- The co opted members will forward details of groups, organisations etc currently up and running for this age bracket.
- Annual electronic surveys called 'Tell Us' are sent to schools and details of this can be provided to the Committee.
- Further evidence can be gathered using Facebook, market square stall if required.
- Schools and neighbourhood partnership meetings would be used to gather further evidence.

It was noted that Emmanuel Church Group's Youth Club would be unable to continue after July 2009 without extra funding.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements for schools was discussed and noted that there are only certain times the facilities can be used but at extortionate costs.

Work is being carried out with Northampton Sports and all schools for the use of their facilities during the summer holidays. Costs could be reduced for clubs.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009 commencing at 6pm. The Chair's draft report would be presented to this meeting.

The Chair commented that he would meet with the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to assist with evaluating the evidence received, members of the Committee would also be invited to attend this informal meeting, if required.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm