



# **SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN EPSOM & EWELL**

## **YOUTH CAFÉ**

**29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2004**

### **KEY ISSUE**

The Epsom Youth Café opened in January 2004 and is approaching its first anniversary. This report reviews the operation of the café during the first year and discusses its longer term sustainability. The Committee is asked to consider a further financial guarantee to ensure its continuation.

### **SUMMARY**

The Epsom Youth Café, unlike a typical café, is specifically designed to cater for young people under 18 in Epsom Town Centre. Its aims are to provide a safe environment and a fun and entertaining atmosphere within the town centre where young people can meet socially in an alcohol free venue.

During its successful first year, the youth café has been widely promoted as an exemplar of good practice. Starbucks, who operate the café, are keen to support its continuation and are considering opening similar facilities in their outlets in other towns.

Although the initial proposal envisaged that the youth café would become self financing, levels of expenditure by young people using the café have been lower than anticipated. Future developments are planned to boost guest numbers and to generate other business to subsidise costs. However, in order to guarantee the continuation of the youth café, the Local Committee is asked to consider making a contribution of £2,000 towards costs for the period to 31 March 2006.

### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee supports the continuation of the Epsom Youth Cafe and makes a contribution of £2,000 from Members' allowances.

## **1 Background**

1.1 The Youth Café in Epsom Town Centre came into existence in January 2004 thanks to an innovative partnership between Starbucks, Surrey County Council's Youth Development Service, Epsom & Ewell Business Partnership, the Borough Council and Police. The Local Committee and the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership provided start up funds. The café has provided a safe and alcohol free venue to young people every Friday night throughout the year.

1.2 In full support of the proposal to establish a youth cafe, the local youth forum, YELL, undertook to promote and publicise the café in order to ensure its success. Some user comments are set out below, and representatives of YELL will be attending the Local Committee meeting to provide additional feedback.

1.3 This report reviews the success of the Youth Café as it approaches the end of its first year of operation and discusses the question of future sustainability.

## **2 The Youth Café**

2.1 Starbucks is at the entrance to the Ashley Centre and provides an excellent location in terms of accessibility, visibility and atmosphere. It opens every Friday from 7 pm to 10 pm for the sole use of young people, aged 13 – 17, where they are able to take advantage of discounted drinks, music and a comfortable environment.

2.2 The venue provides both an alcohol and smoking free environment. Fully trained female door staff ensure security and that age limits are respected. In addition, youth service staff are in attendance throughout the evening to:

- support the establishment of a steering group to oversee the project;
- ensure a safe, friendly and welcoming environment for young people by clearly communicating expectations and ground rules agreed by the steering group;
- promote an atmosphere of respect between young people and staff by building positive relationships with young people and challenging unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour where necessary;
- ensure that all agreed quality processes are carried out, including maintaining youth development service records and assisting the café to operate in accordance with Youth Development Service Curriculum Guidelines, Health & Safety, equal opportunities and child protection guidelines, as necessary.

2.3 The Epsom police youth affairs officer attends the café periodically and acts as mentor and bridge builder between police and young people, as well, at times, as a figure of authority. Town centre officers also pay attention to the café and this helps build positive relationships between police and young people.

## **3 Objectives and beneficial outcomes**

The CDRP has supported the youth cafe project because it complements a range of initiatives to help combat anti social behaviour and alcohol related disorder. The Town Centre is a particular focus for this work, where disorder can be exacerbated by the availability of alcohol to underage drinkers. The safe environment of the

youth café also provides recognition that young people are themselves often the victims of crime.

3.1 The original objectives of the Youth café for the first year were as follows:

- The creation of a unique, upscale and youthful atmosphere that will differentiate “Starbucks Youth Café” from other local establishments where beverages may be sold in the evening;
- The formation of an environment that will bring young people together to socialize without alcohol;
- Good coffee and bakery items at reasonable prices. (All drinks are sold at a 30% discount on normal prices).

3.2 Each of the objectives has been met, but in addition it is important to emphasise the value of an alcohol free environment. The café provides a safe, legitimate alternative to other potential venues which young people might be tempted to use under age. It provides a café/bar atmosphere, where it is cool to be seen. It also completes a chain of venues along the High Street, from YOYO to McDonalds to the Odeon, which provide a range of alternatives to the pubs and clubs.

3.3 Some comments from youth café users are set out below:

- 'Great place to go on a Friday night' Max
- 'Starbucks rocks' Catherine
- 'It's a great idea and having live music is brilliant' Toby
- 'It's really good having youth workers around and we can have a good chat about things' Sarah
- 'Like talking about god, politics and sex in a chilled out setting' Abi
- 'Its safe and warm and I like that' Naomi

## 4 Sustainability and Financial Implications

4.1 During the first quarter of operation the youth café was attended by large numbers of young people (as many as 149 on one occasion). Numbers dropped during the summer to a low point, but have begun to build again. This probably reflects the initial interest, coupled with the need to continually promote the venue as young people grow and interests change. In the future a short period of closure during the summer will be considered.

4.2 The café has proved more popular with young women and future promotion should take account of this.

4.3 Whilst young people are not turned away if they are not making purchases, the venue needs to be promoted as a place where there is an expectation that a purchase will be made. The original cash flow forecast was made on the basis of an expected £4 spend per guest, but the average for the year has fallen well below this, at £1.77. This is a reflection of the levels of disposable income available to users of the café and it is important that cost does not act as a barrier to users.

<b>Summary 2004</b>	<b>Ave Nightly Sales</b>	<b>Ave Guest Count</b>	<b>Ave Spend per Guest</b>
Quarter 1 (12 weeks)	£175.96	102	£1.74
Quarter 2 (12 weeks)	£76.71	52	£1.79
Quarter 3 (13 weeks)	£43.93	23	£2.03
Quarter 4 (7 weeks to date)	£60.97	33	£1.84

Starbucks have provided a level of subsidy to the café to cover their fixed costs and the costs of discounting their drinks by 30% at point of sale. The company is content to continue to offer a level of subsidy. At the outset of the project it was hoped that the youth café could become self financing, but on the basis of current spending levels there will be a continuing need to provide a level of subsidy, at least for the coming 15 months of operation to April 2006.

## **5 Future Developments**

5.1 As part of their corporate social responsibility policy Starbucks are keen to continue the youth café venture and work with local partners and young people to develop the scheme. On the basis of the success of the Epsom venture, Starbucks are considering setting up similar schemes at other outlets.

5.2 Starbucks staff have established a good rapport with their younger clientele and are planning periodic themed evenings, with music and entertainment based on suggestions from guests. It is planned that from the new year 2005, the youth café will be based on the upstairs floor of the premises, rather than spread over both floors. The upstairs offers a seating capacity of 50 and will enhance the opportunity to develop the right atmosphere, as well as giving the added advantage of allowing normal sales in the downstairs section, thus offsetting costs.

## **6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation**

6.1 The Youth Café has successfully provided an alcohol and smoking free meeting place for young people. It discourages under-age drinking and anti-social behaviour and is seen as a valued resource by the young people who use it. It's costs are subsidised by Starbucks, the Youth Development Service and the CDRP and it represents good value for money. In order to guarantee the continued operation of the café, a further subsidy to cover the period to March 2006 is required.

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