



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(MOLE VALLEY)**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MOLE VALLEY

MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL UPATE

11 JUNE 2008

KEY ISSUE

To provide members of the Mole Valley Local Committee an update on the work Mole Valley District Council are doing to help the lives of children and young people in Mole Valley.

SUMMARY

Breakdown of work being conducted by Mole Valley District Council for the benefit of children and young people, including future projects and initiatives.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (MOLE VALLEY) is asked to:

- (i) note the report

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Statutory Basis

- 1.1 The County Council is responsible for delivering a Youth Service for the 13 to 25 year olds, but the District Council has the power under the Local Government Act 1972 to provide services for young people.
- 1.2 The District is perceived as having a high number of residents over the age of 65 (17,000 – 21%) and a relatively low number of young people. Out of a population of just over 80,000 there are in fact just over 20,000 (25%) 0-24 year olds. The 2001 census reveals 19% of the District's population as being 15 years old or younger. The Council therefore has to balance the needs of young people against the needs of its other residents who may require different services but which are all competing for the same resources.
- 1.3 The District Council has been working directly with young people throughout Mole Valley for over six years. This was in response to a number of issues. Firstly, young people themselves told us they felt the District Council was irrelevant to their lives, secondly there was establishment concern over the low percentage of young people, but 18+, voting and there was a need to engage earlier with young people and thirdly the community in general were telling us young people were a 'concern'. There was the perception that young people, 'needed more to do' more leisure facilities and such like. Young people had been identified as a priority group through the community planning process and the council's own planning process. There was a general concern that young people need more to do and this may distract them from anti social behaviour.
- 1.4 Young people do have history against them. Socrates said in 4th c BC *"The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders.... They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and are tyrants over their teachers."*

The District Council's Response

- 1.5 The District Council's initial response was in 2002 to establish a forum for young people to engage with the council. Mole Valley Youth Council was born.
- 1.6 Established at the end of 2002, the Youth Council had three key purposes:
 - To involve young people in defining which Council services should be provided for them

- To inform young people about how local democracy works and why it is not always possible to offer 'quick-fix' solutions to their problems
- To give young people a voice

- 1.7 We began with the intention to listen and listen we did. What did young people want? What concerned them? Well it wasn't lack of things to do – not a main concern anyway. Top of the list was the attitude of the police to young people, they felt being young appeared to be a crime, drugs and the availability of drugs were issues, the bad behaviour of the minority of young people and the resulting poor image the community had of young people. Other issues, the environment, recycling, cost of housing, university fees, safer roads and lack of public transport, a list of issues that in fact reflected the concerns of the whole community.
- 1.8 In addition to establishing Youth Voice the council produced its first Youth Strategy in 2003 in response to the Community's concerns and the identification of young people as a both a council and community plan priority. This work meant we were able to respond very positively to the changing national emphasis on children and young people which culminated in 2004 with the Children's Act.

The Children's Act 2004

- 1.9 The Children's Act 2004, put children's welfare at the heart of government policies by identifying desired outcomes for children. These are:
- ◆ Being healthy – physical and mental health with a healthy lifestyle.
 - ◆ Staying safe – protected from harm and neglect. Growing up, able to look after themselves.
 - ◆ Enjoying and achieving – getting most out of life and developing skills for adulthood.
 - ◆ Making a positive contribution – to the community and society. Not engaging in offending or any anti-social behaviour.
 - ◆ Economic well being – achieving full potential through overcoming socio economic disadvantages.
- 1.10 The District Council already contribute to the outcomes identified above. Examples of these contributions are;
- ◆ **Housing:** The quality of housing has a major impact on the health and the future life chances of children. Mole Valley aims to minimise the use of inadequate accommodation for families. Housing professionals also play a major part in safeguarding children.

- ◆ **Leisure:** Provision of decent leisure opportunities for children and young people is key. This also includes the provision of play, physical activity and supporting alternative methods of learning.
- ◆ **Planning:** Children have an interest in their environment, what is built and how it is preserved. All these issues therefore have an impact on the quality of their life.
- ◆ **Employment:** The Council is a large employer of parents and young people. The way in which the Council acts, therefore plays a significant part in the lives of young people.

1.11 The Children's Act 2004 placed significant duties on Surrey County Council as the designated Children's Services Authority to promote inter agency co-operation between named agencies including District Councils, which are involved with children and young people and contribute to their welfare. These agencies, again including District Councils, are under a reciprocal duty to co-operate with the County Council. Indeed there are specific duties under the Act which district councils are required to comply with, and these include:

Section 10

A duty to co-operate with the CSA to improve the well-being of children and young people by being involved in integrated planning and commissioning of services through local partnerships (and is accompanied by budget pooling powers which is the key provision that underpins children's trust arrangements).

Section 11

A specific duty to ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This requirement also extends to any body providing services on behalf of the Council. The arrangements required by the Act to meet this duty include:

- a) Designating a Lead Member for Children and Young People Services
- b) Designating a 'champion' in the Council who has sound working knowledge of relevant legislation, is at an appropriate level in the council to hold manager's to account, and has clear lines of accountability to the Chief Executive for the council's approach to safeguarding and promotion of children and young people's welfare.
- c) Ensuring that all staff in the Council have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for safe guarding and promoting welfare, and have been appropriately trained to know what actions should

be taken if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child.

d) Ensuring that staff know how to share information in an ethical and legal way.

e) Involving children, young people and families in planning and developing of services, and ensure that existing services are safe and accessible.

f) Putting in place appropriate policies and procedures to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children, and that there are clear procedures in place for responding to allegations of abuse of children and young people.

Section 12

A co-operation duty to share information with other agencies, specifically in relation to the safeguarding and promotion of welfare. This includes working with other agencies in the development and adoption of the common assessment framework.

Section 13

A requirement to be represented on and participate in, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB).

Section 17

An entitlement to be consulted on the production of the Surrey Children and Young People's Plan. It would also be considered appropriate that we continue to have representation on the Area CYP Partnership, as it is through this partnership that the planning, co-ordination and commissioning of 'local' services will take place (via the Area CYPP). In addition, this is likely to be the forum where discussions on moving forward the Youth Matters will take place.

Section 20

A co-operation duty to contribute to Joint Area Reviews (JAR) on children and young people services – which took place in spring 2008

Current Position at Mole Valley

1.12 Mole Valley has made progress to meet these expectations. A Child Protection Policy and Youth Strategy are in place and both illustrate our commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting well-being. Both these documents are available to all staff.

1.13 The Council has both an Officer Champion for young people, currently the Head of Leisure and a Member Champion, currently Councillor C. Corden. The Council is also already engaging with young people and

using their views to shape services, best illustrated by engagement with Youth Voice and Junior Youth Voice.

- 1.14 Safe recruitment measures are in place and appropriate and relevant training is available. There are also effective working relationships in place particularly through the South East Children's Partnership and the Mole Valley Multi Agency Group for Young People and an information sharing protocol does exist.
- 1.15 A solid foundation does therefore exist but more needs to be done. There is a need to ensure that the Council's recognised commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and young people is embedded throughout the organisation and that every member of staff and Councillor is aware of it and is individually committed to it.

Children Services Partnership

- 1.16 Locally, and in response to the Children's Act, Surrey County Council have established the Surrey Children and Young People's Partnership and also four area Partnerships. Mole Valley is part of the South East Surrey Area Partnership. The Partnership is made up of representatives from all the child care agencies of the County Council, youth service, children's service (education and social care); health service providers in Surrey PCT and Surrey and Sussex Health Authority, Surrey Police, Connexions; Surrey CVS, Local County Directors and a representative from the three District/Borough Councils.
- 1.17 The South East Area Partnership first produced a Children's and Young People's Plan in 2005 in line with the outcomes required by the Children's Act and this is updated each year. Naturally it is co-ordinated with the Surrey Plan.
- 1.18 Within Mole Valley work is co-ordinated informally by a multi agency group bringing together many agencies delivering services to children and young people which meets quarterly.

Conclusion

- 1.19 The foregoing sets the scene and the actual work we do with and for children and young people is designed to hit at least one of the five outcomes identified by the Children's Act. The following information goes into some more detail regarding specific projects.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Mole Valley Leisure Services have always worked to benefit the lives of children and young people. Below is a brief review of work being carried out over the past year and includes future work plans.

- 2.2 Over the past year Mole Valley District Council has worked with a number of professionals and community members to create a **Play Partnership** for Mole Valley, who in turn have developed a Play Strategy for the District. This involved assessing current play provision and conducting a play audit for the whole District. As a result of this hard work Mole Valley District Council received £200K from the Big Lottery Fund for play opportunities which will cover the cost of the three successful bids which were entered with the funding application within the Mole valley Portfolio. These three projects were:
- a) The introduction of a mobile play ranger service for the District (underway)
 - b) The installation of a hard court area, skatepark and youth shelter at Meadowbank, Dorking (Consultation beginning imminently, build proposed 2009)
 - c) The installation of new play equipment, a hard court area and youth shelter in Brockham (Consultation beginning imminently, build proposed 2009)
- Playranger service will be launched summer 2008. This service will bring free play opportunities to communities which currently have little of poor play facilities locally i.e. rural areas, traveller sites. These will be offered at different times i.e. afterschool sessions, schools holidays and village day type activities. The equipment will be transported around the district in a branded transit van. We have just successfully recruited this post and the person will hopefully be starting in the next 6-8 weeks.
- 2.3 **Activities for Children and Young People** are organised and run throughout the year. Particularly in school holidays (October, February, Easter and summer). The focus of these activities varies greatly from specific one off sessions i.e. art and crafts based activities, sports activities, days away to activity sessions and play based sessions. These take part in a number of areas across Mole Valley and the amount offered will increase from Summer 2008 as the Playranger will be offering additional play based activities. There are also two Live and Direct programmes which take place in both Leatherhead and Goodwyns.
- 2.4 **Links Partnership Work** (Chart Downs, Goodwyns & North Holmwood) has begun with all members of the Leisure Development Team working on a number of projects locally. Specifically holiday activities based in the locality offered at a reduced rate, Live and Direct is now running weekly, National Playday 2008 will be launched in August, working in partnership to help revamp the Astroturf at St. John's School.
- 2.5 **Communication for Young People** has become paramount with the acknowledgement that information is not always provided for young people. Mole valley leisure Services has worked to improve this by creating 'Ourspace' a brief newsletter aimed solely at young people which includes brief articles of what's happening, what's happened and what to look out for. This is given out through schools, youth centres and

information points across Mole Valley. Alongside this a website has just been created which holds Mole Valley only information for young people. Anything from help, advice, guidance, to places to go and things to do. The launch of this will begin imminently.

- 2.6 Junior Youth Voice** is the youth council for children aged 9 -11 years from across the District. The Youth Councillors; totaling 58 who attend the meetings every other month represent 13 primary schools from across Mole Valley and regularly discuss the meetings most important to them, their community and their school. They have worked on a number of projects; most recently they ran a competition aimed at raising the awareness of safety and in particular road safety issues as many of the Councillors regularly discussed their concerns about their safety in and around their schools and homes. This resulted in them working with a graphic designer to adapt poster entries into actual corrugated plastic road signs which have been given to all local schools to erect and reinforce the message of safety. Junior Youth Voice were successful in receiving an award from the High Sheriff of Surrey to pay for these signs and have just been put forward by the previous High Sheriff of Surrey (Mr Nicholas Sealy) for the National Crimebeat Award.
- 2.7 Youth Voice** the youth council for Mole Valley has just under 40 Youth Councilors who represent their schools and community each month. They have been involved over the past year in a number of projects aimed at benefiting young people and the community. They have created their own educational DVD on Climate Change, created their own leaflet with the PCT about smoking awareness and how to be healthy, they have organised a number of bands events, their own Youth Showcase Awards Ceremony, a free three day leisure event and a group of Councillors has been working with the Capel Youth Action Team to help develop their plans for improved youth facilities within the area.
- 2.8 Youth Opportunities & Youth Capital Fund** which has been allocated by a youth panel made up of Youth Voice Councillors. In the last two years they have had a total of £150K and are about to receive just over £90K for 2008/2009. This funding is to pay for projects that have been led by young people for young people within Mole Valley. Application forms can be downloaded from the Surrey CC website (under Take Part Take Power).
- 2.9 Youth Costa Coffee (Dorking)** has been running since October 2007, every Thursday from 7-9pm for young people only. The funding for this project has been received from Surrey County Councillor Stephen Cooksey and this funding will enable the project to continue until at least December 2008. There has been attendance between 80 and 120 each week and is still providing to be very successful.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 This report is to not the progress of the work done in Mole Valley by Mole Valley District Council. The Committee's option is to monitor and scrutinise the service.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Each project is widely consulted on before action is taken.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Funding for projects is met mainly by Mole Valley District Council, however, some external funding has been sort and allocated. For example from Members Allocations.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All projects meet the equalities and diversity agenda.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 By offering a wide range of activities it is hoped that this will be a diversion away from crime and disorder.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The foregoing sets the scene and the actual work we do with and for children and young people is designed to hit at least one of the five outcomes identified by the Children's Act

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Item for Information, noting and hopefully support.

Big Lottery Fund My Place Programme.

The MyPlace Programme is focused on delivering youth facilities, places for young people to go and get involved in exciting activities. They will be funding facilities which offer young people a place to enjoy their leisure time and the widest possible choice of high quality sports, arts, music, cultural or youth work based activities.

Possible application

The King George V recreation ground and pavilion site are centrally located in the second highest area of deprivation within Mole Valley, bounded on two sides by two of our largest social housing estates. Mole Valley District Council is part of has been working with a local partnership group, the Links Partnership, on the King George V Project to build a new pavilion/community building and improve and add to the recreation ground site's outdoor facilities.

The new building will offer changing facilities which are desperately need to enable use of the football pitches to be maximized, and a multi purpose area which can be used for teaching and training, sports/health advice services and for a wide variety of community uses.

The outdoor facilities will include a multi-use games area, improvements to the existing skatepark, youth shelter and additional junior football pitches, a fitness trail, cycle routes, circular walks, lighting and CCTV equipment, and environmental work.

This project has been set up in response to a range of research and consultation that has identified the need for a community resource able to offer leisure facilities and services to both the youth of the area and the wider community. It is anticipated that the recreation ground and built facilities become the hub of the local community and, in particular involve and integrate the youth of the area into community life.

We anticipate the overall cost is £1.1m and we may be able to get £1 from the big lottery. Applications do need to be signed off by the lead authority which in this case is Surrey CC. So we need the local committees support in order that we have a good chance of having the application signed.