

Area North Committee – 23rd January 2008

9. Supporting Young People in Area North

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Patrick Palmer, Chairman of Area North Committee
Head of Service: Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North)
Lead Officer: Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North)
Contact Details: Charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01458) 257401

Purpose of the Report

To provide members with a brief overview of current activity by this Council and partners to work with and support young people in Area North, as background for a presentation and discussion.

Recommendation

Members are requested to:

- (1) Note the report and raise issues of interest during the discussion session.
- (2) Delegate authority to the Head of Area Development (North) to allocate £4,000 for a holiday programme planned with SCC Youth Service, faith groups and local communities in Martock, Somerton, South Petherton and Langport & Huish Episcopi, to run from Easter to October half-term 2008, agreed with the relevant ward members.
- (3) Delegate authority to the Head of Area Development (North) to allocate £6,000 to a programme of holiday and / or evening activities in Area North villages, to be agreed with the relevant ward member, in line with existing grants procedures and / or delegated financial authority.
- (4) Agree that, subject to authorisation of (2) and (3), conditions relating to costing, publicity and monitoring will be agreed with partners and the Head of Area Development (North), in line with existing SSDC guidance for grants and partnerships.
- (5) Authorise the Area Forum in March 2008 to be held on the theme of supporting the youth in parishes.

Background

The Area North Development plan includes a local priority to “**work with young people to provide places to go and things to do**”. This was as a result of high levels of interest from parishes either within parish plans or other evidence need. On occasions increasing levels of anti-social behaviour prompted interest in developing new activities, however in many cases, the need is expressed based on a lack of local facilities and activities for young people, and minimal access to transport.

In the past, it has been recognised by the Area North Committee that on occasions, agencies have not worked in a co-ordinated manner to work with and support local communities who seek to provide more for young people to do, and to encourage their

involvement in local affairs. In addition, mainstream resources appeared inadequate to meet local needs for support and activities.

The Committee has made regular use of its discretionary funding to grant aid work relating to young people, including the employment of a community worker to strengthen local volunteering and opportunities for children and young people, and grants to local facilities to improve access by young people.

As a result, the Committee has taken an active interest in promoting local partnerships and improved co-ordination between partners, and last month allocated £10,000 over the next few months, to provide an enhanced level of services to young people.

The following notes contain information about some of the facilities, service and activities available to the young people in Area North, together with details of the co-ordination of service delivery. The emphasis is on recreation and local involvement for young people, however it should be noted that many other services are available to young people, for example for health and training, and of course education. Further information can be found on the Somerset website for young people's services www.connexions-somerset.org.uk.

There are two sections – Section One, which includes information on current facilities and activities for young people, including the agencies and organisations which work **directly with** young people and Section Two which includes notes on the co-ordination of youth issues and the support available to those seeking to increase the level of facilities and activities, and participation of young people.

SECTION ONE – working with and supporting young people in Area North – *things to do and places to go*

1. Community Facilities and Activities

a) Youth Centres and other informal facilities for young people

There are four dedicated Youth Centres in Somerton, South Petherton, Martock and Langport & Huish. The buildings are locally owned, by organisations with charitable status dedicated to promoting opportunities for young people in the relevant area. The centres at Martock and Langport & Huish include indoor space only; in Somerton the centre includes a lit outside court, and in South Petherton the youth club adjoins the recreation field.

The Martock Youth Centre has recently undergone a substantial refurbishment, to improve what it can offer its members, as well as addressing problems with the condition of the building.

Many villages benefit from village halls and playing fields, usually held on charitable trust for the benefit of residents' social and recreational development. It is implicit that this is for all ages, although the basis of hiring facilities such as village halls can only be through organised groups, with a hirer over 18 years. Playing fields and equipped play grounds, multi use courts and the like are usually open access.

Sports pavilions / changing rooms can provide a form of youth facility, even if only as a base for use of the playing field. The recent refurbishment of the Long Sutton Club house was planned with providing a place for young people in mind.

Appendix A includes a list of the known informal youth facilities, supported by SSDC in the past few years. This is in addition to local playing pitches, which are numerous, although some lack even basic provision for football, and the requirements for sporting use can act as a barrier for informal use.

Numerous church organisations enable wide use of their facilities by young people, for example the St Cleers Church in Somerton and the Gospel Hall in Martock, and there are several dedicated buildings owned by uniformed groups (Scouts, guides etc).

Support for the management of buildings and facilities is available from

- Community Council for Somerset
- Somerset Playing Fields Association
- South Somerset District Council
- The umbrella bodies for churches, uniformed groups, pre-schools etc

b) Voluntary Youth Clubs, activities for young people and drop-ins

Youth clubs run by volunteers within Area North are generally held in village halls and community buildings and offer a variety of activities. The providers range from local church groups to non-affiliated volunteer clubs and details can be found within community plans and local directories.

All groups working with young people should confirm to the law, including good practice, to ensure the protection of children from harm.

- A number of voluntary youth groups were established in Area North around 6 years ago, many of which have ceased to operate due to loss of volunteers, and limited support to the start up, development and sustainability of groups.
- In Somerton, local volunteers operate a thriving junior club from the youth centre, under the Management Committee.
- The Ilton youth club has run for many years, complemented by holiday play schemes for young children, as a result of a few dedicated volunteers.

There is regular interest in starting youth clubs / youth drop-ins in villages, and start up support is available from South Somerset District Council. The current position of Young Somerset, which formerly had the lead role for this, is unclear at present.

A significant group of volunteer run activities for young people are through the various uniformed organisation (Scouts, Guides), and other initiatives such as Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Between them, they offer the opportunity to take part in regular club sessions and more adventurous activities such as sailing, hiking and camping as well as the chance to socialise in a safe and stimulating environment.

The Somerset Rural Youth Project, Community Safety Project Officer (see below), Community Council for Somerset Fieldworker and Police Community Support Officers, can all assist communities to establish a youth club / drop in either directly or by signposting to various agencies. Umbrella bodies for scouts, guides and cadets provide start up support to new affiliated groups, although grant aid may be available for equipment and insurance.

2. Somerset County Youth Service

There are currently two Senior Youth Workers in Area North, Kirstie Brown and Jane Abraham, in addition to full and part-time Youth Workers. Their work is dictated by need, covering informal education as well as more targeted work around drugs, housing, leaving home, the law, health and other issues that affect young people. They have assisted with the establishment of Youth Councils in South Petherton, Martock and Ilton and young people are encouraged to participate in the UK Youth Parliament, Young People's Interactive Training Opportunities and, currently, the Battle of the Bands.

Kirstie's area includes Martock and South Petherton where she also works closely with Stanchester School, running regular drop-in sessions during the school day and additional sessions as requested by the school.

Jane covers Somerton and Langport, along with full and part-time Youth Workers. As well as running youth sessions in those towns they have links with Huish Episcopi School.

Regular youth sessions are held in the Youth Centres as below:

| Location | Age range | Frequency | Provider |
|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---|
| Somerton – Wessex Rooms | 11+ | 1 x week (Mon) | County Youth Worker – Emma Hix |
| Langport & Huish | 11+ | 1 x week | County Youth Worker – Emma Hix |
| South Petherton | 11-19 14-19 | 1 x week 1 x week | County Youth Worker – Corrie Robertson |
| Martock | 11+ | 2 x week from Feb 2008 | County Youth Worker – Corrie Robertson |

In addition, during holiday periods SCC provides activities for young people at various of their facilities including:

- Evening sporting courses via the Adult Leisure Service
- Sporting activities held at the schools, organised by the Community Learning Partnership

3. SSDC Services

a) The Young People's Officer

The Young People's Officer, Jay Lewin, supports youth volunteers in SSDC by:

- Keeping an up to date database of active clubs and schemes.
- Offering start-up support and advice to communities wanting to start new clubs or other youth initiatives.
- Offering Youth Development Grants of up to £500 to support youth projects that provide regular and sustainable opportunities for young people.
- Providing free processing of CRB police clearance for volunteers working with young people.
- Suggesting ideas for activities, linking in with District wide youth projects.
- Networking to link artists & sports leaders with club projects.

b) Holiday and other activities

At various times during the year, SSDC supports different activities at District owned facilities, e.g.

- Ham Hill Country Park
- Yeovil Museum
- Via the Active Lifestyle Team

c) Other service teams

The Area Development and Sports & Leisure Teams are amongst the service teams who work together to support community-led projects to develop facilities and activities for young people.

4. Youth Parish Councils

There are nine Youth Parish Councils in South Somerset, of which three are within Area North: in South Petherton, Martock and Ilton. The Youth Parish Councillors have taken decisions to improve local youth facilities, provide youth shelters and tackle anti-social behaviour in partnership with the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

As the first Youth Parish Council in Area North, the South Petherton group has willingly assisted other local youth councils to establish and has won a national award for their achievements. Increasingly they are focusing their efforts on their own projects and, in recent months, have taken over responsibility for the cardboard recycling scheme, providing them with a continuous source of income.

The successful establishment of the three Youth Parish Councils within Area North has been a good example of co-ordinated service delivery, involving the work of the Parish Councils, the County Youth Service, Local Action Groups, the Community Safety Project Officer and local PCSOs.

5. Somerset Rural Youth Project (SRYP)

Somerset County Youth Service does not cover rural areas directly and in order to help address this, the Somerset Rural Youth Project (SRYP) was established in 1997 and currently holds funding from the Big Lottery.

It has evolved into an independent youth work organisation which aims to involve young people in rural regeneration and now receives funding from a number of bodies, including SSDC and Somerset County Council. It has a three year Partnership Agreement with SSDC that is agreed and renewed on an annual basis.

A copy of the service level agreement is in **Appendix B**. To date, the SRYP is achieving the targets set in the partnership agreement - in some areas exceeding expectations.

The work of the SRYP includes:

- providing free, confidential advice and support to any person living in a rural setting (i.e. parishes with a population of less than 3,000)
- a moped loan scheme which enables a young person to loan a moped for up to six months – giving them access to training, job search or employment

- working with a small number of targeted individuals or groups as requested, which this year has included Chilthorne Domer, Tintinhull, Seavington and Ilton within Area North.

6. Young Somerset

In the past, Young Somerset has had a Service Level Agreement with SSDC and has provided support for young people in a similar vein to that of the Rural Youth Project, though on a smaller scale. It does not receive any current funding from SSDC however and its future is uncertain.

7. The Faith Sector

The faith sector is actively involved in providing services for the local young people, either as church based youth groups or as part of a wider ecumenical setting with a commitment to serving the whole community. For example, the Christian Liaison for Young People covers the large catchment area of Huish Episcopi Secondary School and incorporates members from the Baptist, Methodist, URC, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. Together they are working with the School's Head teacher on a project to provide a full time Christian Youth Development Worker to be based in the secondary school from September 2008.

The Christian Fellowship in Martock runs a mobile café, which visits the local recreation ground weekly, providing free burgers, drinks and activities and attracts up to 40 young people at a time to the caravan and gazebo. This has proved very successful and popular within the parish and appears to be attracting a number of 'hard to reach' youngsters.

8. Time Out Together

Time Out Together (TOT) was founded in 1997 to support young people and families, focussing on under-16s who are socially excluded, children with disabilities and working families. They operate a mobile café from the refurbished SSDC bus, offering a safe haven for young people. Their work is not confined to Yeovil and, subject to capacity, is available if requested by a local community. In Area North they have visited South Petherton at the request of the Local Action Group. This was a successful five week trial on the recreation field and has led to a reduction of 'incidents' in the car park. The bus has been retained for a further 12 weeks with Frontline Councillor grant money. The project has also visited the gypsy site at Chubbards Cross near Ilton, whose young residents have limited access to recreation.

9. Referral Services

There are a number of referral services available to disaffected young people within Area North. The young people are referred through schools, Connexions, Social Care and the Youth Offending Team and are generally available throughout South Somerset. Some of these are listed below.

a) South Somerset Motor Project (Revheads)

Revheads was founded in 2005 and started operating in early 2006. As part of the County Youth Service, the project operates with administrative support from the local Area Youth Office at Morley House in Yeovil. Based on the Lynx Trading Estate in Yeovil, the project has been mainly funded by the Mendip and South Somerset

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Community Safety Partnership and South Somerset County Youth Service. It is a project that enables disaffected young people to attend a 10 week course where they work with a qualified mechanic / youth worker to gain practical experience. The Community Safety Local Action Group in South Petherton, for example, is currently looking to commission some sessions for young people from their parish.

b) Firebreak

This scheme, operated by Somerset Fire Brigade, is aimed at Key Stage 4 pupils within secondary schools who exhibit signs of disaffection and disruptive behaviour which has a negative impact on learning. Those referred are given the opportunity to attend a Fire and Rescue Service themed, day release, development programme for one school term. This teaches the young people the value of teamwork by developing practical skills, improved motivation and self-esteem and raised achievement.

c) B active

SSDC has established this scheme which provides young people who have mental and emotional health needs with the opportunity to access free leisure opportunities for up to three months. If the young person completes the course successfully, they will be offered a one year free subscription to Passport to Leisure. The first point of contact for this scheme is the Young People's Officer, Jay Lewin.

SECTION TWO – supporting young people by planning and working together

As might be expected, the most effective action to improve opportunities for young people to participate, and take advantage of available facilities and activities, can be seen through local community action, coupled with communication, shared understanding and responsive service design and delivery.

1. The National Framework

The Government's aim, under its Every Child Matters policy, is that every child – whatever the background or circumstances - should have the support to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

This has meant that all organisations involved with providing services to children are beginning to work much more closely together and as part of this, Somerset County Youth Service is currently involved in the reorganisation to locality teams. These teams under a Locality Manager will include Youth Workers, Education Social Workers, Family Advice and Liaison Workers, Connexions Personal Advisor, Community Child & Adolescent Mental Health Worker, Children Centre Managers and Substance Misuse Workers. The work of the locality team will be delivered via the 'Children and Young People' block of the Local Area Agreement. When the reorganisation is complete, there will be eight locality teams established across Somerset.

2. Somerset County Council – Every Child Matters

As part of Somerset County Council's response to the Government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative, a Youth Matters Working Group was established with representatives from SCC Children's and Young People's Directorate, Connexions Somerset, Barnardos, Youth Offending Team, Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership and SSDC. This group looks to deliver three government challenges to:

- allow young people to have control of the things to do and places to go in their own area;
- encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities;
- provide better support to young people as they make decisions about their careers, education, health and other issues important to them.

The current Somerset Local Area Agreement includes the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1 – Improve the emotional, physical and mental health of children and young people in Somerset to promote healthier and more enjoyable lifestyles.
- Outcome 2 – Improve expectations, aspirations and life chances for the most vulnerable children and young people in Somerset including children looked after.

3. South Somerset District Council Young People Strategy

In response to the government's initiative and consultation, in February 2006 SSDC's District Executive Committee resolved to adopt a Young People Strategy from 2006 to 2012, which had the overriding aim of increasing the quantity and enhance the quality of children's and young people's leisure opportunities across South Somerset. The Strategy is a comprehensive document and its delivery relies on the activities of both internal and external stakeholders. Within the scope of the document are several objectives that relate specifically to youth work and the council appointed a Young People's Officer to co-ordinate the various stakeholders to ensure duplication is avoided and that resources go to the areas of greatest need.

The four aims of the Young People strategy are listed below and are supported by 18 objectives:

- Providing stimulating things to do and places to go
- Targeting those who are disadvantaged
- Encouraging positive contributions
- Supporting choices

4. Co-ordination of Youth Work in Area North

The SSDC Play & Youth Team's Draft Service Plan for 2008/09 includes targets to improve co-ordination of work to enhance the level of service provided for young people and the adults working with them.

In order to enhance the co-ordination of youth work being carried out specifically in Area North, an informal meeting has been arranged by the Area Development team for early February to which all those involved in the work have been invited. These include the PCSOs, youth club leaders (volunteer and paid), those working in the faith sector and

the County Youth Service. Further meetings will be organised based upon the aspirations that arise from this initial one.

5. Area North Community Safety Local Action Groups / Community Safety Project Officer

It is often the case that local interest in supporting new facilities and activities arises when levels of anti-social or other illegal activity reaches a level which proves unacceptable to the local community. At these times, the Area North Community Safety Action Panel has supported the forming of a Local Action Group to identify the issues and suggest actions and initiatives, which could reduce the problems. The emphasis is on taking all factors into account, and encouraging all ages to listen to each other and work together.

The Community Safety Project Officer is a post funded by the Home Office and hosted by SSDC. The current postholder, Denise Dunford, has a district wide remit, working towards reducing crime and the fear of crime at a local level through signposting and encouraging agency and voluntary groups to work collaboratively. There is scope within the role to initiate pilot projects for young people as and when the opportunity arises. Within Area North, she has been particularly active within Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Ilton, South Petherton and Chilthorne Domer. For example with encouragement from Denise, a small group of volunteers ran a six week programme of holiday activities in Chilthorne Domer and work is continuing within that community to promote and support the youth there.

Case Study: Martock Youth Affairs Committee

Martock Youth Affairs Committee (MYAC) was established in 2003 following community consultation (as part of the community plan) that highlighted a need for greater investment of time and money in the young people of the parish. The committee meets four times a year and consists of representatives from the following bodies: Martock Parish Council, Martock Youth Parish Council, local schools, Martock Christian Fellowship, Somerset County Youth Service, South Somerset District Council (ward members and relevant officers), Somerset County Council (division member and senior youth worker).

The MYAC has recently welcomed the newly appointed community youth worker, appointed by Martock Parish Council as a pilot project to assess the impact on local needs, through a dedicated and full time youth worker.

The committee has reviewed local priorities for young people, and supported a range of actions. The increased level of communication and mutual support has been welcomed by all involved. Achieved to date is:

- Creation of a Youth Parish Council;
- Refurbishment of the Youth Centre and refreshment of the management committee
- Installation of half MUGA and Skate Park at the Recreation ground.
- A project group continues to work on the new-build Youth Centre project
- Youth Parish Council representatives attend Martock Community Partnership meetings.
- Currently considering a drugs awareness course for parents

Financial Implications

£10,000 allocated from Area North service enhancement budget

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The work referred to above supports the following objectives:

- 2: Maintain above 75% the people satisfied with the way the council runs the district
- 8: Work in partnership with the public and private sectors in developing and delivery of the Market Towns Vision
- 9: Identify and address the particular issues affecting rural areas
- 11: Improve the health and well-being of our citizens
- 16: Maintain above 80% the people satisfied with their neighbourhoods as a place to live

Other Implications

Local Area Agreement Outcomes 1 and 2:

- Outcome 1 – Improve the emotional, physical and mental health of children and young people in Somerset to promote healthier and more enjoyable lifestyles.
- Outcome 2 – Improve expectations, aspirations and life chances for the most vulnerable children and young people in Somerset including children looked after.

Young People Strategy 2006-2012

Area North Development Plan 2007/2008 highlights the following priorities:

- 3.3: work with young people to provide things to do, places to go;
- 3.6: support communities to maintain and develop facilities and activities;
- 4.3: developing democratic involvement by young people at parish, district and national levels
- 1.2: support the production, and delivery of parish plans, and other community led initiatives which aim to promote involvement and self-help for local communities

Background Papers: *Report on Improved Area Working – Area North Committee December 2007*

Appendix A – Youth facilities (please note this is a draft document and is still being updated – if you have any corrections, amendments or comments, please contact the Lead Officer).

Appendix B – Service Level Agreement with the Somerset Rural Youth Project (SRYP).

Appendix C – List of contacts.