

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 24 JANUARY 2008

LISTENING TO THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the arrangements which require to be put in place to establish a Children and Young People's Forum.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the full Council meeting on 17 May 2007 it was agreed that as part of the Council's decision making arrangements, a Children and Young People's Forum would be established alongside the Local Community Planning Forums and the Equalities Forum.
- 2.2 The Head of Service: Community Support was remitted to bring forward proposals to Cabinet for its consideration thereafter.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 A consultation event was held with children and young people on 7 November 2007. This comprised young people from East Ayrshire secondary school pupil councils; representatives from Park and Woodstock special schools; representatives from the forum for young people who are looked after and accommodated and representatives from youth forums across East Ayrshire. In total 44 children and young people took part in the event.
- 3.2 In addition, specific consultation took place with young people from a minority ethnic background.
- 3.3 Representatives of Student Associations were sought from Kilmarnock College and Ayr College (Cumnock Community Campus). Although some interest was expressed from Ayr College (Cumnock Community Campus) no one was available to participate.
- 3.4 At the consultation events, young people were asked to produce a roadmap which afforded them the opportunity to consider how they would wish to be involved in the decision making processes as it relates to the Council.

4. FINDINGS

- 4.1 Young people considered issues in respect of the undernoted issues:
- Communication/consultation;
 - The Forum/representation;
 - Feedback from the Forum;
 - How issues are raised;

- Support required.

4.2 Appendix 1 sets out the outcome of the consultation. The key messages can be summarised as:

- The Forum needs to represent all young people and different age groups;
- The views of the most vulnerable young people need to be heard;
- Young people wish to be listened to and see action;
- The Forum needs to think creatively about communicating with young people;
- A balance is needed between hearing young people's issues and service providers seeking views from young people;
- Support for young people to participate will be required.

5. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 A community planning advice note was issued in 2006 regarding the engagement of children and young people in community planning. This was set within the context of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children and young people have the right to have their views taken into account in decisions made about matters that affect them and that adults in a position to help them have a duty to provide them with support.

5.2 The National Standards for Community Engagement are also relevant in respect of engaging children and young people, namely:

- Involvement – *the identification and involvement of people in organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement*
- Support – *the importance of identifying and overcoming barriers to involvement e.g. timing, equalities issues etc*
- Planning – *the importance of gathering evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to design the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and actions to be taken*
- Methods – *the importance of identifying and using methods of engagement that are fit for purpose*
- Working together – *the importance of using clear procedures that enable participants to work with one another effectively*
- Sharing information – *the importance of ensuring that necessary information is communicated between participants*
- Working with others – *the importance of working effectively with others with an interest in the engagement*
- Improvement – *the importance of actively developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants*
- Feedback – *the importance of feeding back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected*
- Monitoring the evaluation – *the importance of monitoring and evaluating whether the engagement achieved its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement*

5.3 Arrangements for engaging and consulting with children and young people in East Ayrshire are already well established. There are three Youth Forums operating within the East Ayrshire area. The Forums debate and discuss

local issues, influence change in local communities and take responsibility for decisions which can affect their lives. Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament regularly attend these Forums. In addition, other mechanisms include:

- Nurseries regularly consult very young children through Circle Time;
- Pupil Councils – all schools operate active Pupil Councils and to a greater or lesser extent influence some of the key decisions within local schools;
- Annual survey of key issues for young people conducted through schools
- Looked After and Accommodated Forum – the Looked After and Accommodated Forum includes children and young people who are looked after and accommodated away from home either in residential care or with foster carers;
- An Annual Youth Conference which regularly has over a hundred young people attending discusses and debates issues which are current and of importance to young people. In the past this has included issues relating to health, offensive weapons/young people's safety and active citizenship;
- What's Important to You Seminar – The annual What's Important to You Seminar involves young people in deciding what topics they would wish to consider and are actively engaged in the delivery of the workshops. The seminar usually considers national and local issues and debate and discussion takes place. A topic this year was child protection;
- Leisure services regularly seeks views from children and young people about the range of activities taking place;
- Some voluntary youth organisations have Youth Committees which shape the work of the groups.

5.4 All of the above arrangements are used as mechanisms to inform and shape (i) the children and young people's services planning process, or (ii) specific services.

5.5 In addition to these groupings, individual children and young people are involved in decisions which affect them on individual and personal basis. This is particularly the case for children who are in receipt of children and family social work services or in receipt of services on a multi-agency basis due to their additional support needs/disability.

5.6 There are a number of areas which require to be further supported. This includes support for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans gendered (LGBT) as well as those young people who come from a minority ethnic background.

5.7 Overall, arrangements for feeding back the outcome of consultation and engagement within East Ayrshire could be strengthened.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1** It is proposed that the current arrangements are enhanced in 2008/9 by the undernoted:
- (i) Establishing an East Ayrshire Young People's Representative Forum. Nominations will be sought from:
- MSYP's
 - Secondary Pupil Councils
 - Youth Forums
 - Looked After and Accommodated Forum
 - Young people with a disability (special schools, and/or representative groups)
 - Colleges
 - Representative minority ethnic groups
 - East Ayrshire Council as an employer
- 6.2** There are currently no representative groups in East Ayrshire for young people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgendered.
- 6.3** The Forum will meet, at a minimum, twice per year.
- (i) The first meeting of the Forum will be a workshop which will determine key issues to be taken forward in the year. This workshop will comprise young people; elected members and officials.
- (ii) An Executive Group will be established from the forum to formally meet a minimum of twice per year with elected members.
- (iii) The timing of the meetings will best suit young people and therefore are likely to be convened late afternoon/early evening.
- 6.4** It is proposed to host the workshop in April this year. Three key issues will be prioritised to be taken forward in 2008/9 and agreement will be sought for a broad terms of reference. The Forum will require to be underpinned by a programme of training to develop confidence, skills and personal development.
- 6.5** Underpinning the overall Forum will be four Local Youth Forums. The current membership of the existing Forums will be reviewed to ensure the opportunity is available for representation from community/youth organisations, as well as representation from the various bodies above. It has to be recognised however, that some of the bodies/Forums set out above will only ever be East Ayrshire Council wide. Opportunities will be taken throughout the year for joint activity between the Youth Forums; Equalities Forum and Community Planning Forums.
- 6.6** As the Local Youth Forums mature the need for both an East Ayrshire wide Forum and Executive Group will be reviewed.
- 6.7** Although the Forum will need to be representative of all ages, it is felt at this stage that children under 12 years of age need to have separate arrangements. An annual workshop will therefore take place with children attending primary school. Part of this will include a question and answer session with elected members.

7. REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1** In keeping with the proposals relating to Community Planning Forums, the outcomes and decisions taking place at the Forum will be recorded. Relevant issues will be directed to appropriate community planning partners for their consideration. Young people will be encouraged and supported to take issues forward themselves. One of the main issues raised by young people in the consultation process is the need to feedback to young people in a way which will most interest young people. This will be progressed in conjunction with young people.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The Council is currently reviewing its overall budget in respect of community engagement. It is however, recognised that financial support will be required.

9. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The implications arising from this report include the potential for policy to be shaped by children and young people.

10. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The recommendations are consistent with the overall aims and aspirations of the Community Plan and specifically the Promoting Community Learning Theme.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1** There are a number of risks associated with this paper:

- Children and young people do not wish to participate; or the infrastructure is not in place to maintain the Forum;
- Children and young people's views are not perceived to be heard.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1** It is recommended that members of Cabinet:

- (i) approve the proposals set out in this paper;
- (ii) that 3 Elected Members (1/1/1) be appointed to serve on the Forum/Executive and that Council be invited to nominate the Elected Members accordingly; and
- (iii) otherwise note the content of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

January 2008

KG/SR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Service:
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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT ON THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S FORUM
CONSULTATION EVENTS

Three consultation events took place with young people to discuss the establishment of an East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Forum. The consultation events took place November and early December 2007 with over 50 young people. Young people came from local forums, schools and ethnic minority groups.

The programme for the main consultation event included a welcome by the Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and Kay Gilmour, Head of Service: Community Support. Young people then went into different workshop groups to complete the road map for the Children and Young Peoples' Forum. The two smaller consultation events followed the same format as the workshop.

Each workshop group had a facilitator and scribe and supported young person to respond to the questions under key themes noted below.

- **Communication/Consultation**
- **The Forum/Representation**
- **Feedback**
- **Raising of Issues**
- **Support from Services**

On the map group/individuals drew or wrote responses to the key themes. The aim was to make this as an interactive session and for each young people to express their views in a way that they found most comfortable.

MAIN MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

The Forum/Representation

- It is important that the Forum represents all young people and different age groups. The main message was that young people wanted to be listened to, taken seriously and wanted action not words.
- It is important that the views of the most vulnerable young people are listened to.
- Working and talking in small, conformable groups as well as making the session's fun and not a chore would encourage young people to participate and know that they were being listened to.
- There are a number of barriers for young people and these include;
 - Young people not aware of the forum
 - Not interesting / don't want to get involved
 - Views not taken seriously

- Asian girls may not be allowed to go if parents do not fully understand what it will entail and mixing with males would be an issue.
- Young people with so called 'bad behaviour' don't get represented – often pupil reps are hand picked
- Not represented well enough – ideas don't often translate to actions
- May be seen as a silly idea by some peers. May get “slagged off” by friends
- Lack of advertising – times and dates.
- Extra work to fit in with normal life and school work
- Apathy, what's the point
- School leavers don't know about it.
- Transportation
- Should be at week ends, however, others preferred midweek.
- Time available for some young people was an issue.
- Should a time-table of meetings be set up?
- One option is to have different young people at each meeting, to hold informal meetings that young people from across the authority can attend or 1 to 1 meetings when necessary.
- Other suggestions included getting people into school to tell young people about the forum and how they can get involved or have internet polls/hand out questionnaires during school time to ensure involvement.
- Sometimes representation would depend on the issues being discussed and maybe age specific.
- Another way of reaching people is through peer support with young people supporting each other. Some people thought younger people would be intimidated by older young people and others felt that younger people are already interacting with older young people at Youth Forums and therefore already interacting with older peers.
- There should be an equal number of representatives for each age group. A buddy system could operate to support young people. Possible isolation of age groups if the forum was split i.e. primary and secondary.
- Forum representation should change annually and representatives could come from existing groups or alternatively hold elections within schools. Consideration would need to be given to elections for young people not at school.
- It is important that only young people who want to do it should be a member and no one should be forced to do it.

- Nominate best candidate by responsibility, age and maturity. The main thing is the commitment to the forum.
- It was suggested that the main forum should link to smaller forums. The interaction of young people through youth clubs, forums, sports groups and schools is important and a good way of getting representatives for the Forum. Buses could go round schemes and outreach workers and wardens can speak to these young people in their own territories.
- Clear guidelines should be set for the meetings and a calendar of meeting and the issues to be discussed agreed.
- Someone older on the forum – development worker to guide young people

Communication and Consultation

- The Forum needs to think creatively about communicating with young people. There is a place for informal/formal meetings but consideration needs to be given to using phone texts, email, internet forums and social networks such as BEBO, MySpace and the use of Blogs and You Tube.
- Dialogue Youth should also be used to share information. Consideration should also be given to using local radio and plasma screens in schools to share information and keep young people updated on what is happening in the Forum.
- PSE lessons could also be used to ask young people about issues.
- Communication could also be done through youth workers, community wardens and support workers
- Open days, publicity via schools or surgeries by young people in schools, youth groups and other organisations would help get information out and hear the views of young people. Leaflets, information in the local press and on local radio should also be considered.
- Consult using the workshop format bringing young people together.
- Keep it enjoyable and use team activities. Look at stuff done at Columba 1400.
- Use the annual Youth Conference, young people attend and it is an excellent way to find out more about what's happening in our communities.
- Plane with banner on it!

Feedback

- Feedback through newsletter e.g. includes minutes of meetings and proposal for action give to all students.
- School assemblies or notice boards could be used. Council member could come to assembly to discuss what they have done once every few months.
- Use flyers or information on school plasma screens to feedback. Texts, emails, podcasts and websites such as Dialogue Youth could be used to pass on information and feedback on issues.
- Talk to us directly and use power points

Raising of Issues

- Issues could be taken to forum in a multitude of ways e.g. text, email, phone letter or by person.
- Young people should be given general topics to get started but it should be mostly all their own work.
- In school use comments board or box of ideas so that children can put their issues in. The issue with the most comments is the one discussed.
- Reps could bringing up their views or young people could share their experiences
- Issues should be the young peoples own and their youth workers should help research
- Anything that's relevant
- Issues from what's important to you consultation at the start of the forum
- Bring forward issues through forum members, MSYP, schools, college, youth clubs and other clubs
- Speak about anything you want
- Sim City, play game of virtual forum. Virtual town might elicit young people's views.
- Balance between specific issues and more general wider issues
- Adult guidance but balance between young person's views other agenda's
- How does the forum take issues forward?
- Main point is to work together to improve our community

Support from Services

Help from Youth Workers

- Support for forum – needs adult help but not adult orientated
- Someone with the knowledge of who to go to in order to make things happen
- Assistance with transport and funding for resources and equipment
- Help with logo for forum
- Accessing computers
- Support from adults, teachers etc to guide the young people so they work as effectively as they can
- Encouragement
- Place to meet
- Help from youth workers, outreach workers and community wardens.
- Support young people's safety whilst at meetings and on the way to and from them.

December 2007