

# Cabinet

## 2 March 2021

### Youth Executive Advisory Panel

#### For Decision

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

**Local Councillor(s):** Cllr

**Executive Director:** T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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**Report Status:** Public

#### Recommendation:

That the Cabinet:

- (i) Note the findings of this report and support the implementation of the recommendations of the Youth Executive Advisory Panel (EAP)

#### Reason for Recommendation:

The cross party EAP gathered information on the current youth offer and plans for its development to support the delivery of the council's plan.

#### 1. Executive Summary

A cross party EAP was created to focus on the council's youth offer, to identify learning from the transfer of youth and community centre assets commenced by the predecessor council, Dorset County Council; explore the current offer for young people in Dorset and to identify issues affecting current providers of youth provision and identify potential solutions.

Members of the EAP considered the findings from a survey of the youth sector, mapping of youth activities and provision, and reports from officers. This report provides an overview of the key findings and makes a number of recommendations for next steps on the provision of support to youth clubs and groups; the relationship between Dorset Council employed youth workers and community run youth centres; and the governance for developing the youth offer.

## **2. Financial Implications**

Implementation of these recommendations will require changes to how money is provided to youth organisations in Dorset. The £100,000 currently made available to a wide range of youth activities through Crowdfunder would instead be targeted towards youth club provision through a simple grant making process.

## **3. Well-being and Health Implications**

Access to youth clubs and other positive activities promotes wellbeing. The provision of support to young people through a range of different mechanisms can support their wellbeing. It will be important to ensure that local services work together to support young people that have been negatively impacted by Covid-19.

## **4. Climate implications**

No specific climate change implications have been identified through this report.

## **5. Other Implications**

Voluntary organisations provide a wide range of positive activities and important support to children and young people. This paper sets out a proposal for providing ongoing support to voluntary youth organisations.

## **6. Risk Assessment**

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

## **7. Equalities Impact Assessment**

An equalities impact assessment has not been completed as part of this work. It is recommended that officers undertake this work following the outcome of the cabinet decision.

## **8. Appendices**

## **9. Background Papers**

## **10. Introduction**

10.1. Executive Advisory Panels (EAP) were established to offer the opportunity for elected members from different groups to gather information and make recommendations to Dorset Council's Cabinet on action that are relevant

to the delivery of the council's plan. Following changes made in September 2020 it is likely that in future this sort of joint working work will be undertaken in panels overseen by the relevant Overview Committee.

- 10.2. It was agreed at a full council meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 that there would be benefit in setting up an Executive Advisory Panel to focus on the council's youth offer.
- 10.3. The purpose of the EAP was to:
  - Identify learning from the transfer of youth and community centre assets commenced by the predecessor council, Dorset County Council.
  - To explore the current offer for young people in Dorset
  - To identify issues affecting current providers of youth provision and identify potential solutions.
- 10.4 The EAP was chaired by the Chair of People and Health Overview Committee, Cllr Andrew Kerby, and the Vice Chair was Cllr Les Fry. There was participation by members from all groups, supported by officers from children's services. The portfolio holder and lead member for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help participated as observers.
- 10.5 Members of the EAP considered the findings from a survey of the youth sector, mapping of youth activities and provision, and reports from officers. This report provides an overview of the key findings and makes a number of recommendations for next steps.

## **11 Key Findings**

### **The Youth Offer**

- 11.1 Young people have told us that they want a wide range of leisure, arts, sports, cultural and learning opportunities. Access to these varies due to location and affordability. A mapping exercise to understand the range of youth activities, clubs and groups identified that there is a wide and varied range of different types of activities across Dorset, but that there is an identified gap of in youth club provision, particularly in the Portland area of the county. It was also identified that there is a building that could be made available for the provision of a youth club in Upton.
- 11.2 Information about youth activities is listed on the council's Family Information Directory, but there are limitations to this. Not all activities are listed and young people don't tend to use this as their first choice of information provision. There is no single place that young people can use to find out about youth activities.

- 11.3 Dorset Council employs a small number of targeted youth workers (eight in total) to lead and respond to contextual safeguarding issues such as child exploitation as well as providing support to and liaising with existing youth club provision provided by community youth centres. As the needs of each individual youth centre and community is unique, the support they require is different.

#### **Status of Youth Club provision**

- 11.4 The predecessor council operated twenty-two youth centres from premises that were leased from private landlords, were on school sites or were owned by the council. Nineteen of these are operating as youth centres through a number of different arrangements including tenancy at will, freehold transfer, and local arrangements with a number of schools. There remain a small number of outstanding issues related to premises and legal transfer for some youth clubs that continue to be worked on by officers.
- 11.5 A survey of youth clubs and groups was distributed (including to all former Dorset County Council Youth Centres) to understand current position. Whilst the majority stated that they were operating successfully there were a number of areas of concern identified which included delays in building transfers, repair and maintenance of buildings prior to asset transfer, the sustainability of their volunteer base, financial worries (further impacted by Covid) and the level and type of support offered by Dorset Council. Learning from officers that were involved in the transfer identified that the level of officer time and support that was required to deliver safe transfer of the assets was underestimated, which impacted on the timeliness of the transfer and where the council was not owner of the site, this led to further complications and delays.
- 11.6 For those clubs and groups that are operating successfully the key themes are the determination and hard work of staff, volunteers and community support; partnership working; and other community groups using the space and successful funding bids. Support from town and parish councils was highlighted as particular beneficial.
- 11.7 Potential support needs were identified which included integration of support, access to training, funding support for both running costs and staff, support from councils and others to hire space in the building, better communication and sharing of good practice between groups and help with recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- 11.8 Youth clubs and groups suggested that the youth offer would be improved through support to help local areas to work together to integrate services; easier access to grant funding, more outreach and detached work, better

access for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and a single place for communication of the offer.

## **Support to Youth Clubs and Groups**

11.9 Infrastructure Support is provided to youth clubs and groups in a number of different ways:

- (i) Dorset Youth Association is an umbrella organisation that offers the opportunity for youth clubs and groups to affiliate and receive support such as policy development, DBS Clearance, support to volunteers, training, advice with fundraising. This is a charitable organisation that raises its own income with a grant contribution from the council. There are 49 affiliated clubs and groups. There is much positive feedback about the support offer but opportunities to target support in a different way have been identified which include a reduction in duplication and a greater focus on impact. This general offer of support was not always sufficient for some of the unique challenges faced by the community organisations that stepped forward to take on the transfer of youth and community centre premises and there would have been benefit in identifying bespoke support.
- (ii) The children's services workforce development team offer training, opportunity to gain youth work qualifications and offer support and guidance at no cost to community organisations. This is valued by youth clubs and groups.
- (iii) There are a number of infrastructure organisations supporting the voluntary and community sector which are really valuable and collectively go a long way to meeting the needs of youth clubs identified through the survey. The EAP found that there is an opportunity to better communicate this offer so that all organisations are aware of the support; better coordinate the support offer to reduce duplication and explore how infrastructure organisation can best use technology to better connect and share best practice.
  - a. The 0-25 forum supports organisations working with children and families through meetings, an annual conference, newsletters and information alerts.
  - b. Dorset Community Action support charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises to new and established groups
  - c. Volunteer Centre Dorset supports, promotes and develops volunteering across the county.

11.10 Financial support is provided to organisations offering youth activities in 2 different ways:

- (i) Match funding pot (£100k) distributed through a Crowdfunding platform which seeks to increase local sources of support, flexible use for new and existing groups to provide community led projects focused on places to go, things to do and social action.
- (ii) Themed grant opportunities from the Corporate Revenue Grant Support fund that support the delivery of the Council's Plan.

11.11 The Youth EAP found that while a range of organisations had benefited from Crowdfunding and it enabled the amplification of funding, traditional youth centres and clubs were less likely to have benefit and myths around the use of it had been difficult to shift. Former Dorset County Council youth centres in particular have been least likely to access funding through this mechanism.

### **Children, Young People and Families Plan**

11.12 There are a number of activities related to developing our youth offer that are contained within the partnership Children, Young People and Families Plan (2020-23). These are listed below:

- (i) Create and publish personal development opportunities such as Volunteering, peer support, peer mentoring
- (ii) Support the provision of a wide range of positive activities including youth clubs, detached youth work, group work, arts and culture, sports
- (iii) The programme of activity identified to support this include:
  - a. Update the information directory and publish offer
  - b. Identify volunteering opportunities through VCS
  - c. Bid for Youth Hub
  - d. Increase work with National Citizens Service
  - e. Targeted group work programmes and virtual youth work offer
  - f. Provide support to VCS providers of universal youth work

## **12 Recommendations of the EAP**

12.1 The EAP recommend that:

- (i) The multi-agency Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People is the appropriate governance forum for the oversight of the development of our youth offer and the EAP is supportive of the programme of delivery outlined in the previous section.

- (ii) Given that organisations that took over running predecessor council youth and community centres were least likely to access Crowdfunder, that the current approach to funding for positive activities for young people is changed and the £100k set aside for Crowdfunder is repurposed and prioritised for these through a simple grant allocation process.
- (iii) The provision of qualification support and training continues to be provided by Dorset Council to voluntary and community run youth centres.
- (iv) That the infrastructure organisations that are commissioned by Dorset Council are asked to work more closely together to minimise duplication and to modernise the support offer to community run youth centres. Monitoring meetings between officers and infrastructure organisations will focus on impact.
- (v) That the Community Infrastructure Levy is used to support the development of youth provision for young people in Dorset, particularly focused on areas where gaps in provision are identified.
- (vi) That a Memorandum of Understanding is created between all community run youth centres and Dorset Council employed targeted youth workers to clarify expectations and ways of working to ensure sharing of good practice and avoidance of duplication.
- (vii) That elected members with experience of setting up and supporting youth clubs offer support to ward members who are interested in supporting the development of youth club provision in their local area.
- (viii) That officers pay attention to working with community organisations to address any outstanding issues.
- (ix) That a digital offer of youth provision and better information provision on the range of youth activities available across the county is delivered at pace.
- (x) That officers from Children's Services seek to support the development of youth club provision in Portland by working with the local community and local member to develop a plan.
- (xi) That sufficient resource, including officer time, is made available to support any future asset transfer arrangements in the future.

**Footnote:**

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.