


## REPORT TO CABINET

22 July 2020

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Youth Facilities Working Group Report</b>
<b>Presenting Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Rajbir Singh Chair of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board</b>
<b>Director:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger Director of Law and Governance &amp; Monitoring Officer - Surjit Tour</b>
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member Approval and Date:</b>	No
<b>Director Approval:</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Urgency:</b>	None
<b>Exempt Information Ref:</b>	None
<b>Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable):</b>	Boorughwide
<b>Scrutiny Consultation Considered?</b>	Scrutiny Youth Facilities Working Group Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	James Sandy, Senior Democratic Services Officer Deb Breedon, Democratic Services Officer

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

**That Cabinet:**

1. Receive and consider the report and recommendations of the Youth Facilities Scrutiny Working Group which was agreed by the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 22 June 2020 and referred to Cabinet for consideration as set out in Appendix 1.

2. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, respond to the recommendations of the Children's Services and Education Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations and how they will be implemented.
3. Consider the representation of young people on Town Deal Boards and that young people are consulted on the development of Town Investment Plans in Summer 2020.

## **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board established a working group in January 2020 to carry out a Review of Youth Facilities in Sandwell. The report outlines the findings and recommendations of the working group for Cabinet's consideration.
- 1.2 The focus of the working group was to find out what young people have, need and want, and to gather information to inform a Youth Facilities Sufficiency Strategy for Sandwell.
- 2 Several mechanisms were tested to gather evidence during the review they were evaluated and will inform future scrutiny working practices. Evaluation feedback of the scrutiny review process will be referred to the Scrutiny Review Working Group to inform future scrutiny working practices.

## **3 IMPLICATION FOR VISION 2030**

- 3.1 High quality play and youth services improve the life chances of children and young people by enabling them to develop the confidence and aspirations for a successful adulthood. It is also acknowledged that children and young people have a right to enjoy their childhood. The services benefit whole communities, local neighbourhoods, families and individual children and young people.
- 3.2 Reviewing Youth Facilities, developing a sufficiency strategy to shape future services aligns to ambition 10 - that Sandwell has a reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focussed on what really matters in people's lives and communities.
- 3.3 As we start to consider Reset and Recovery post-Covid19, there are opportunities to use the information and recommendations from this report to influence the future shape of the Council's services.

## 4 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Youth Facilities across the country have been significantly depleted over the last ten-years, however, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has managed to maintain some important services for children and young people that many other local authorities have not managed to protect.
- 4.2 The Youth Facilities Working Group was established by the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, it consisted of four members of the Board: Councillors Singh (Chair), Chidley, McVittie and Preece. Members worked independently, and as a group, to gather evidence, supported by a core officer group.
- 4.3 The rationale for establishing a Youth Facilities Working Group was the need to consider current local youth provision and the role and sufficiency of youth work in line with the statutory guidance for Local Authorities.
- 4.4 The Working Group conducted the review and the process that it followed was evaluated. The Working Group gathered evidence to understand more about what youth facilities Sandwell currently has, what it needs and what people want.
- 4.5 The Working Group used a project plan which tested a range of methods to gather evidence including desk top research, #Myhillzone survey on social media, visits, forums, a question time session with [SHAPE youth forum](#) members and meetings.
- 4.6 The report provides a snap shot of youth facilities in Sandwell, based on the evidence gathered from January to March 2020 which aims to inform service shaping, resource requirements and future youth facilities provision.
- 4.7 The recommendations of the working group are contained in paragraph 16.3 of the report.
- 4.8 The experience of delivering youth services during the Covid19 lockdown have also helped to inform the recommendations in this report.

## 5 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Recognising and protecting the future of these valuable services is important for the children and families of Sandwell and the Working Group highlighted the importance of multi-agency working and changing what we do to meet the changing environment and needs of young people.

- 5.2 The Working Group acknowledged that this is an environment of increasing demand and resource pressures, the services cannot be 'everything to everyone' and some prioritisation would be needed, especially in light of external factors, the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown and uncertainty of grant funding from external sources would have extreme impact on Council resources.
- 5.3 The evidence gathered in the Working Group report also provides information about youth facilities in Sandwell to strengthen the Sandwell's Town Investment Plans and maximise funding from the Governments [Towns Fund](#). Town Deal Boards for each of the three selected Towns - West Bromwich, Rowley Regis and Smethwick will develop and agree a Town Investment Plan (TIP) for summer 2020. Government Investments in social infrastructure – town centres, community spaces, schools, libraries – can create spaces for people to meet and deliver projects that build on a spirit of pride that is often strong in towns and will give a strong foundation to develop skills and health. The prospectus for Towns Fund highlights, in the skills and enterprise infrastructure section, that places should also consider how they might provide additional support to young people to help them access traineeships or apprenticeships so that they can access and progress in work, especially for those young people at risk of leaving schools and being NEET (not in education or employment or training).
- 4.4 The Covid19 lockdown period has also demonstrated that good quality youth work in parks and on streets is also important. During the lockdown, detached youth work teams have been present in all of Sandwell's parks on a daily basis, meeting young people not normally involved in the youth service, the majority of whom have said that they would like to be involved in youth service activities in the future.

## 5 **EVALUATING THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PROCESS**

- 5.1 The approach used by the Working Group throughout the review was to 'shine a spotlight' or 'take a snapshot' of a specific topic within a specified timescale.
- 5.2 Key elements of the approach included looking at a specific topic, providing clarity on the current situation, identifying gaps in provision, looking at implications such as resource and capacity and informing service planning, future proof services and ensure decisions are aligning to the Vision 2030.
- 5.3 The final steps of the project plan for the Scrutiny Working Group was to evaluate the process they had followed. A google evaluation form was circulated and completed by Members.

- 5.4 Feedback received about the process proved very encouraging and indicates that the scrutiny review process is a successful tool for future scrutiny work. The feedback received is attached for information. (Appendix 2).
- 5.5 Further scrutiny of issues identified, outside the focus of the review, during the process will not be lost, they will inform the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Boards.
- 5.6 Tracking of the recommendations will be carried out to monitor implementation and value added in terms of improvement to Youth Facilities. Monitoring will be reported to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

## **6 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 6.1 Consultation with public, partners, young people and voluntary sector was carried out during the evidence gathering process of the review. Further detail is set out in the report of the Working Group.

## **7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 The purpose of the review is to consider whether current youth facilities meet the needs of young people and if the Council should consider alternative options.

## **8 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Youth Service is funded through an SMBC base budget and income generated from a variety of sources.
- 8.2 The working group identified that Local Government Budget reductions (2010-2019) had resulted in a marked reduction in youth provision and the way it was delivered in Sandwell. It considered that current provision was not sufficient to meet the needs of young people now and in the future, and that future resource would need to be considered when prioritising and developing the youth offer.
- 8.3 Government has recognised the need to invest in young people's futures through additional funding for youth projects. Children's and Education Scrutiny Board will further consider maximising future funding opportunities for youth provision, and youth participation in developing Town Investment Plans.

## **9 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no current considerations.
- 9.2 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.

## **10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 The Youth Services provides targeted group work relevant to protected characteristics.

## **11 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 11.1 There are no current requirements for a data protection impact assessment to be carried out relevant to this report.

## **12 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 12.1 There are no crime and disorder risks specifically relating to this report, however, it must be noted that the impact of youth engagement in positive activities has implications for crime reduction.

## **13 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

- 13.1 The sustainability of services is reliant on the continued provision of funding for services, some of which are directly funded through government grants or traded income.
- 13.2 There continues to be increasing demands on Play and Youth Services to support community and borough wide events. In particular, the Youth Service is called upon to provide support to local activities by providing the climbing wall, youth buses and provision of live music from Coneygre Arts Centre. In addition, there is pressure to deliver the Youth Offer in some towns where there is a shortfall in voluntary sector provision.
- 13.3 Enhanced Youth Support has proven to be an integral part of the Youth Service offer. This service provides support to both individuals and groups through targeted interventions and referrals are received through a number of partners including schools, COGs, Police and Children's Centres. The success has been such that demand is beginning to exceed capacity.

## **14 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

14.1 Play and Youth services that benefit the wellbeing of children and young people are a vital component of successful lives and contribute to social value within Sandwell's communities.

## **15 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

15.1 There are high demands on the youth buses. The double decker bus is 20 years old and given its age is prone to regular breakdown during the winter months. To replace the bus and fully kit it out would require an investment of up to £200,000.

15.2 The Youth Service has operational management responsibility of Coneygre Arts Centre and Malthouse Stables Outdoor Education Centre. These centres both have income targets which contribute to the core budget of the Service.

## **16 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

16.1 The report of the Youth Facilities Review Working Group is attached (Appendix 1). The report details the evidence gathered, findings and conclusions of the Working Group and the recommendations to be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

16.2 **Conclusions and rationale for the recommendations are set out in paragraph 7** of the report. The key areas identified for change were:

- Communication- tell people about the youth offer
- Internet connection, upgrade equipment and a safe place for young people (WiFi and Dry)
- Transport and safe travel for vulnerable young people
- Funding and revenue investment
- Sufficiency of Youth Offer and multi-agency approach
- Capacity – more youth workers needed, more work with partners and extending youth range to include young people earlier
- Developing democratic processes and active participation from young people in decision making.

### 16.3 The recommendations for consideration by Cabinet are:

**R1 A Partnership Framework (to include a Communications Plan and Multi-agency approach)** is developed with young people, for young people and is specifically targeted to promote current activities and future opportunities using the experts within the council to provide a joined-up plan that compliments services across the local authority. This should consider how we currently communicate, what we currently communicate and the most effective platforms to use across a range of media.

A **Youth Symposium** should be held in early 2021 for all partners in the borough to help build a clear picture of what is available, build upon key themes arising from the Scrutiny Review, the multi-agency approach and develop closer partnership working for a joined-up offer for Sandwell. The youth symposium should draw together a joined-up approval to youth work and young people in Sandwell.

**R2** Young people should be afforded **safe, flexible, space of their own, with 'Wi-fi & Dry' as the basic offer in Sandwell**. The council should take a strategic approach and consider modelling 'space options' across the Borough's 6 towns, these could test:

- a) Use of libraries within extended opening times – rethinking their use in the community
- b) Mobile provision (through a bus or support vehicle).
- c) Pop up shops and underused town centre units.
- d) Leisure & Activity Centres.
- e) Other council properties and schools.
- f) New build, where no existing options are deemed suitable.

**R3** The council explores the option of providing **free or concessionary public transport for young people to enable better access to local youth activities, opening up Sandwell and all it offers**.

Targeted provision should be considered in relation to vulnerable young people and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

**R4** The council should **take a more strategic approach to funding** and explore existing funding pots through a better use of regional partnerships and directories. Better alignment could be made **to complimentary activity within the voluntary sector** (such as SVCO's community grants) and **to the corporate social responsibility objectives** of local businesses.



**R5** The Council should **develop a renewed ‘Youth Offer’** which clearly identifies the very positive activities that are currently on offer and addresses those gaps which would enable a more bespoke approach. The **National Youth Agency’s Standard Quality Mark Framework** should be used to measure the capacity, quality and sufficiency of youth facilities in Sandwell.

**R6** A renewed youth offer would aim to close the gaps in provision and ensure sufficiency of youth facilities, but in order to do would require an increase in capacity and therefore the resources required to deliver the provision would need to be reviewed.

**R7** Following the success of the **Question Time session** held during the review, it is recommended that quarterly Question Time sessions be scheduled into the Scrutiny Work Programme, with Shape forum the Cabinet Member / Champion for Children and Young People.

16.4 The Evaluation of the process undertaken is attached (Appendix 2). The methods used and feedback from working group members will inform the development and future working practices for the scrutiny function.

16.5 The experiences of the Covid19 lockdown, and engagement with young people through detached youth work during that time, has reinforced the recommendations in this report.

## **17 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board 18.03.2019 - Youth Service 2017/18 [Report](#)

## **18 APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 – Youth Facilities Review Report

Appendix 2 – Evaluation Feedback – Scrutiny Review Process

Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer - Surjit Tour  
Executive Director of Children’s Services – Lesley Hagger