

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING
DATE: 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO THE ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To create a more focussed approach to youth engagement across Children, Young People and Learning (CYP&L), and to recommend that this approach is promoted to and adopted across the Council and its partners, supported through CYP&L and the Community Engagement and Equalities Team.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Executive Member agrees the approach to youth engagement in Children Young People and Learning.**
- 2.2 **That the approach is recommended for adoption Council-wide to achieve good quality young people's engagement across all areas of its work.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Youth engagement across the Council has been fragmented and happens in an ad-hoc way. There have been some successes in developing joined up approaches across CYP&L that help to highlight the importance of taking account of the voice of children and young people.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Do nothing. If existing practice were continued there will be some engagement with children and young people, but their voice needs to be heard more clearly to help shape policy development and service provision.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 In 2013 the Bracknell Forest Partnership approved its third Community Engagement Strategy covering the period 2013 -16, bringing together community engagement activities into one overarching strategy for the Borough. The Partnership want to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of community engagement work, through improved communication and increased collaboration to ensure local communities are informed, involved, consulted and enabled to take action within their own communities. The Partnership also wants to make it easier for people to see that their views have made a difference and what has changed as a result.
- 5.2 The strategy and its action plan outline how partners will work together to ensure local communities can take action and participate in whatever way they wish to

influence service delivery, decision making and policy development. Guided by this blueprint, and by working together, we can share resources, expertise, contacts and local community knowledge. The 'Approach' to engaging young people has been developed to compliment and further define the Council's and its partner's approach to engaging with young people. The Approach has adopted the objectives laid out in the Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy.

Developing the 'Approach'

- 5.3 In 2012 the CYP&L Departmental Management Team tasked the Senior Youth Worker (Young People's Engagement) under the Special Projects Programme to carry out an initial review of how and where CYPL services currently receive input on provision from children and young people. The project then explored how current engagement with young people can be improved drawing on best practice nationally and locally. This has led to the development of 'A positive approach to the engagement of young people' (attached as Annex 1).
- 5.4 The aim of this Approach is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of engagement activity to enable children and young people to influence decision making and empower them to take action to tackle issues that affect them. This will support the Council and its partners to make even better decisions, policies and services, meeting the needs of individuals and communities. The objectives of the work are to:
- Ensure children and young people have an equal opportunity to have their voices heard by increasing the accessibility of consultation and engagement activity.
 - Measure the impact of consultation on service development, commissioning and provision to ensure that it has a genuine influence.
 - Ensure that good quality timely feedback is provided to all those who take part so that they know their views have made a difference.
 - Improve communication between, and increase collaboration by, partners on engagement activity to make best use of limited resources.
 - Increase community engagement skills among the Council and partner's workforces to improve the quality of consultation and engagement activity.
- 5.5 Once this Approach is agreed the project lead will work to implement and improve co-ordination of young people's engagement across CYPL, Council-wide and with our partners. The importance of engagement will be promoted. Relevant staff will be identified and invited to attend training, to be facilitated by young people. Training will address awareness, skills and appropriate methods. Engagement processes, such as online opportunities, linked to the redesign of the Xpresionz website, will be developed where necessary, subject to the availability of sufficient resources and staff skills. An implication will be services needing to plan and implement more substantial engagement with young people. A detailed action plan will be developed to ensure delivery of the Approach.
- 5.6 The Approach was informed by best practice nationally and the views of local children, young people and parents.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The contents of this report are noted and no immediate legal issues arise.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise at this stage. The development of the detailed action plan will need to take account of the level of available resources.

Head of Community Engagement and Equalities

- 6.3 The Approach and its action plan have great potential to improve engagement with young people in the borough and is a very positive development. The Approach delivers on objective one of the BFP Community Engagement Strategy 2013-16 to ensure all people have an equal opportunity to have their voices heard by increasing the accessibility of consultation and engagement activity, as well as contributing to the achievement of the strategies other objectives. It will be important to ensure that the delivery of the action plan is joined up with the other activity that is going on Council wide to improve our consultation and engagement work.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 The Approach aims to achieve the best outcome for any child or young person, taking into account factors of ethnicity, religion, language, culture and disability.
- 6.5 Engagement processes will take account of language, cultural and disability needs.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 i) failing to deliver on and monitor the action plan
ii) failing to join up this activity with other consultation and engagement activity.

This is a document to be implemented Council wide with shared accountability.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 This work has been developed with the support of the Bracknell Forest Youth Council, SilSip – Children in Care Council, Early Years and Community Engagement and Equalities Team.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Small focus groups of parents, children and young people. Meetings.

Representations Received

- 7.3 The views of consultees have been incorporated in the approach.

Unrestricted

Background Papers

British Youth Council, Positive Stories

Department for Education and Skills, Building a Culture of Participation

National Youth Agency, Hear By Right

BFP Community Engagement Strategy 2013-16

Contact for further information

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