

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 January 2012

FINDINGS OF THE INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EMPLOYMENT

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC PROSPERITY)

Contact Officer: Eloise Appleby Tel No: 01962 848 181 Email
eappleby@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

OS2 – [Appointments to Informal Scrutiny Groups and External Bodies](#), 1 June 2011

PER195 – [Customer Service Apprenticeship Scheme Proposal](#), 6 June 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As part of the consultation underpinning the Council's Change Plans for 2011/12, it emerged that there was a growing level of concern about the prospects for young people seeking training and education. This concern has clearly increased, as a result of very weak growth of the national economy after the recent recession, accompanied by media reports that young people are being hardest hit by the difficult business climate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a proposal from officers, at its meeting in June 2011, to establish an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to assess more precisely the scale of this perceived problem and consider what might be done in response to it.

An ISG was established, and concluded at the end of November, following a series of six meetings featuring eleven external contributors and including a number of visits. Members of the ISG have drawn up a series of recommendations arising from the key findings of their investigations, and The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider these recommendations with a view to referring them to Cabinet for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Members consider the recommendations of the ISG as set out below, and refer them to Cabinet for implementation with immediate effect:
 - i) Officers proceed with a commission for a study to:
 - a) accurately assess the number of NEET young people in the Winchester District;
 - b) map current provision to help these young people into work;
 - c) identify gaps in provision, where the system is failing young people;
 - d) develop an outline action plan identifying pragmatic and cost-effective actions which could be taken by the Council and its partners in helping young people into training, education or employment.
 - ii) The Council, through the Head of Organisational Development, makes a formal commitment to making a target number of 20 unpaid work placements per annum available to Job Centre Plus or other recognised agencies/organisations working with young people, and reports these to the Personnel Committee on an annual basis;
 - iii) That the Head of Organisational Development and Head of Economy and Arts produce a clear protocol to support the work placement programme;
 - iv) The Council, through the Head of Organisational Development, makes a formal commitment to making a target number of 3 apprenticeships per annum available to Sparsholt College or other recognised organisations, as an example to other employers, and that these are reported these to the Personnel Committee on an annual basis. This commitment is made on the basis of no additional direct cost to the Council;
 - v) The Council plays an active role in promoting both work placements and apprenticeships to other employers in the District, making information accessible and clear, and celebrating successful examples;
 - vi) Officers commission a Job Club in Stanmore, using seed funding from the economic prosperity commissioning budget with the intention of establishing a self-sustaining, volunteer-based operation after two years;
 - vii) The Council convenes a conference of arts providers in and around the Winchester District to consider opportunities for non-conventional interventions to support young people, in line with the

Council's stated objective of drawing on the District's cultural strengths to find innovative new approaches to supporting the local economy.

2 That other member organisations of the Local Strategic Partnership be encouraged to consider measures designed to reduce youth unemployment in their own programmes and initiatives.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting of 1 June 2011, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) with the remit to consider issues around young people and employment/training.

1.2 The six Members of the ISG were Cllrs Huxstep (Chair), Collin, Witt, Scott, Berry and Pines. The ISG first met on 26 July, and adopted terms of reference as follows:

This ISG will:

- a) *explore the nature of the difficulties facing young people from the Winchester District seeking to enter the workplace, and*
- b) *seek to identify ways to address these difficulties in partnership with other local agencies.*

1.3 For the purposes of the ISG, 'young people' covers the age range 16 to 24. Moreover, Members agreed to give special consideration to young people living in the Community Strategy 'Priority Neighbourhoods' of Winnall and Stanmore.

1.4 The programme of meetings, including details of the broad themes for each one and the presentations made, is included at Appendix 1. This report summarises the main findings of the ISG, and sets out its recommendations for further consideration by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2 Context

2.1 One of the four outcomes of the Council's ten-year Economic Strategy, adopted in June 2010, is

"We make the most of local opportunities to enhance the skills and ambitions of those who live in the district".

In drawing together the first of the Change Plans (2011/12) to support delivery of this outcome, it became clear that there was a growing concern about the number of young people in the Winchester District who are not in education,

employment or training (NEET). This ISG was proposed in part as a response to this concern, expressed through stakeholder consultation meetings, and fuelled by national media reports that young people are likely to be worst affected by the current economic downturn.

- 2.2 Young people are considered to be vulnerable at the moment in a number of ways:
- a) they can be considered 'cheaper' to make redundant, and less valuable in terms of skills/experience when redundancies are being made;
 - b) they have reduced support from traditional public services, which are scaled back as a result of national cuts to public spending (eg Connexions, Hampshire County Council Youth Support Service);
 - c) they may not apply to university because of the new charges and consequent burden of debt for graduates;
 - d) companies are not recruiting, so new graduates are not able to find work in spite of their qualifications;
- 2.3 Even in better economic climates, there are reasons why young people find it difficult to obtain work or training. The following were raised by contributors over the course of the meetings:
- a) some young people who are unemployed have idealistic ideas about the job they would like, and take time to adjust to the idea that volunteering or taking on other paid work will be beneficial in a long term plan to realise these ideas;
 - b) young people are less likely to have their own transport, which limits options to travel to work, particularly when they live in rural areas or at a time when bus services are being cut altogether or are suffering from reduced funding;
 - c) peer behaviour and/or family role modelling may in some cases deter them from even registering as unemployed, because it is 'the norm' not to be unemployed;
 - d) employers prefer applicants with experience of the workplace, and young people are not always given the chance to acquire this experience;
 - e) young people – particularly those suffering from low self esteem, for domestic, educational or personal reasons – found the challenge of applying for jobs simply too daunting and simply 'opted out' unless they were helped in a very direct way (eg filling in applications or accompanied to interviews);
 - f) some young people viewed work as a 'means to an end' and did not understand how to dress or behave appropriately, nor did they respect their working environment;
 - g) there is perhaps less stigma attached to unemployment than has been the case in times gone by, which means there is less incentive to find work;
 - h) there is a perceived lack of entry level jobs, although this may reflect the fact that some young people have unrealistic aspirations about their options at the start of their working lives;

- i) there may be a belief that migrant workers are reducing job options for residents, although this was not supported by any evidence.
- 2.4 Members of the ISG were keen to understand how such factors were affecting young people living in the Winchester District, and whether such barriers could be reduced in a practical and cost-effective way.
- 2.5 Members felt that Winchester City Council could play an important direct role in providing opportunities for young people who find themselves in a NEET position. They also recognised that there are other partners on the Local Strategic Partnership who can help to address the causes and consequences for these young people, and felt that the Council should seek to influence these partners to address shared concerns (Recommendation 2 refers).

3 The Current Situation

- 3.1 The ISG heard first from a representation of Job Centre Plus (JCP). She provided a helpful overview of recent changes to the service, offering more time and attention to those with more significant employment challenges and a relatively 'light touch' approach for those who had the initiative and skills to find work more easily. Three dedicated advisors worked with young people aged 16 to 24. The JCP's goal was to place 90% of claimants in employment before the deadline for referral to the Work Programme, which is the Government's new one-to-one support programme to get long term unemployed people into work on a 'payment by results' basis.
- 3.2 The JCP speaker agreed that although there were pockets of the District with higher 'NEET' figures, even these were considered to be encouraging compared with other parts of Hampshire and the wider region. At the time of her presentation, she advised that there was a total of 661 claimants of Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) through Winchester Job Centre, of whom 197 were aged 16 to 24 years. Of this age range, there were no claimants who had claimed JSA for longer than 52 weeks. (These figures did not reflect the whole District, however, as those living further out of the Town would tend to 'sign on' at other Job Centres.)
- 3.3 Data from the Office for National Statistics showed that in June 2011, the highest percentages of registered unemployed young people (aged 18 – 24) in the Winchester District were to be found in the St Luke Ward (14.6% or 35 young people) and the St John's & All Saints Ward (12.5% or 30 young people). Bishop's Waltham followed at 8.3%, then Denmead, St Bartholomew and St Paul all at 6.3%.
- 3.4 A study of leavers from Year 11 (ie aged 16) from Winchester schools in 2010 provided by Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Department suggests that around 1.8% (equivalent to 23 young people from the six participating schools, although not all of these young people will have been living in the Winchester District) would not be in education, training or employment once they left the school.

3.5 Further data from October 2011 and compiled by Hampshire County Council shows that the known percentage of NEET young people over 16 is around 4.8% (223 people) but by age 20 it is increasingly difficult to obtain information about the young people either because they have lost contact with their old schools and/or because they choose not to engage with official agencies.

3.3 Members felt that:

- i) Living in Winchester must be particularly difficult for NEET young people who were unable to enjoy the quality of life offered to others in the District;
- ii) With a relatively small number of young people to consider, it should be possible to provide some form of meaningful and targeted intervention to improve their life chances;
- iii) Although the ISG was focussing on 16 – 24 year olds, it was clear that early intervention (ie at school and even pre-school) was an important factor in reducing youth unemployment.

Moreover, as the meetings continued, Members developed a growing conviction that there may be a significant number of 'hidden' NEETs, who were not registered with JCP and were not therefore included in the official statistics.

3.4 As part of their investigations, Members heard from three young volunteers at The Carroll Centre; visited a Youth Options site to hear about the NEET running in Southampton, and were informed of the YMCA's café/drop-in centre at St John's House. They also attended a conference at Winchester Guildhall called 'Business and the Big Society', which put forward a number of ideas about corporate social responsibility.

4 Key Findings

4.1 *Scoping the Problem:* throughout the ISG's discussions, Members were given to understand that while JCP was confident about its work with young people on its JSA register, there may be many more who are not registered and for whom there were potentially many problems to resolve, from practical ones such as provision of appropriate housing (eg for care leavers and young offenders) to personal ones such as low levels of self-confidence, disability or dependencies. Whilst the ISG had heard from many agencies involved with supporting young people, they felt that provision was piecemeal and was provided without a full understanding of the underlying scale and nature of the problem. There seemed to be no clear overview of co-ordination of activities, other than the Integrated Offender Management programme. Moreover, most agencies/organisations focussed their limited resources on areas with greater levels of deprivation than the Winchester District, so some of the most interesting schemes were not available to local young people. The City Council could play a helpful role in producing clear, meaningful and accurate evidence about the wards of the Winchester District; mapping the work of the existing agencies and the gaps in this provision, and co-ordinating joint action to achieve better results for the young people of the Winchester District. A

commissioning specification has been drawn up by officers and advertised as one of the Change Plan Commissions for 2011/12. It includes a requirement to produce a costed and prioritised action plan, and the idea has been supported by stakeholders and officers from other team in the Council (eg Community Safety, Strategic Housing). This will be subject to Cabinet approval of Recommendation 1(i).

- 4.2 *Work Experience*: young people benefited from work experience, which increased their chances of finding long term employment. More employers of all sizes could be encouraged to support work experience programmes, whether in partnership with Job Centre Plus, individual schools, youth support organisations or other services. Winchester City Council could offer a guaranteed number of unpaid work experience opportunities each year, although it is acknowledged that this does place additional pressure on staff supervising such placements. Most secondary schools operate work placement programmes for 15/16 year olds, but placements are often for one or two weeks which does not realistically provide a rounded experience for the volunteer nor a benefit for the employer. Moreover, the level of ability of such placement students is constrained by age and confidence. Job Centre Plus can work with the Council to identify the most appropriate duration and skill set for opportunities identified by Heads of Team to ensure that there is mutual benefit in the process. Consideration should be given to paying for bus or parking costs for the young people, in recognition of their financial situation. The Council and its partners could also encourage businesses to do more to support work experience programmes, promoting the value to the employer, to the local economy and to the young person alike. It is suggested that a protocol be drawn up by the Head of Organisational Development and the Head of Economy and Arts to support this programme.
- 4.3 *Apprenticeships*: although the range of types of apprenticeship and the different agencies providing them could be confusing, they were considered an important route out of unemployment for young people. New, flexible apprenticeships of the kind offered through Sparsholt College meant that employers were not obliged to commit to a full year, but could host part of an apprenticeship according to business need, the performance of the young person and the employer's capacity to pay or supervise. This reduced the risk significantly. Sparsholt College had identified Winnall as a target area for its programme, but felt there were many more businesses in the Winchester District who could benefit from the scheme. Winchester City Council has recently taken on two apprentices in its Customer Service Centre as part of its commitment to 'growing talent' within the organisation ([PER195](#) approved by Personnel Committee last June refers), and is currently facilitating a shared placement with the Theatre Royal and Hat Fair under the PUSH Creative Apprenticeships initiative. There is potential, too, to propose that some of the West of Waterlooville Art Contribution from the developers could fund an apprentice. Moreover, the Council and its partners could, as for work experience, spread information and encourage participation among local employers, particularly if the budget proposal to create a fund to incentivise apprenticeships is approved by Council in March this year.

- 4.4 *Targeted Support:* one of the areas of the District where there is a higher proportion of NEET young people is in the Council's priority community of Stanmore. Whereas in Winnall a Job Club was set up, largely through the efforts of a local resident keen to put something back into her neighbourhood, there is no similar provision in Stanmore. A locally based Job Club would mean that residents would not have the psychological barrier of travelling into the City Centre for advice, and – located in the right setting – could benefit from receiving advice when visiting that setting for other purposes. The idea of a Stanmore Job Club has been supported by several contributors. A commissioning specification has been drawn up by officers and advertised as one of the Change Plan Commissions for 2011/12 – subject to confirmation by Portfolio Holder Decision Notice. If successful, this concept could be rolled out to other areas where there are higher levels of NEET young people, including Bishop's Waltham and Wickham.
- 4.5 *Arts Interventions:* one of the most striking contributions was made by Hampshire County Council's Youth Arts Officer, who had set up a dance-based programme for young offenders at the Trinity Centre in Winchester. The Wessex Dance Academy had been influenced by a similar and very successful scheme in Bradford, where 80% of participants completed the scheme and entered employment or education. The project looked to transform the lives of young people through contemporary dance over a 12 week period, and the two recent programmes had had a 99% retention rate, despite working with some of the most challenging young people in the County. Another local example of positive intervention via the arts is Winnall Rock School, where young people are taught music skills but also develop a range of life (and so employment) skills through weekly tuition sessions. Over the summer, a dance and video project hosted by The Carroll Centre at Stanmore saw some of the most disengaged young people coming forward to play an active role in the project, both as performers and producers. Feedback from other agencies, such as YMCA, suggests there is more untapped potential in this area to provide alternative forms of intervention. Winchester City Council could usefully bring together a range of arts providers to consider how to make the most of their imaginative approach, which could potentially provide a less conventional route to helping young people where traditional interventions have failed. These would aim to provide transferrable skills for employment, designed to equip them for a 'life of jobs' rather than a 'job for life', in the words of the Assistant Headteacher from The Westgate School.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the findings above, and consider the proposed actions arising from each one, with a view to referring these to Cabinet for implementation with immediate effect:
- i) Officers proceed with a commission for a study to:
 - a) accurately assess the number of NEET young people in the Winchester District;

- b) map current provision to help these young people into work;
 - c) identify gaps in provision, where the system is failing young people;
 - d) develop an outline action plan identifying pragmatic and cost-effective actions which could be taken by the Council and its partners in helping young people into training, education or employment.
- ii) The Council, through the Head of Organisational Development, makes a formal commitment to making a target number of 20 work placements per annum available to Job Centre Plus or other recognised agencies/organisations working with young people, and reports these to the Personnel Committee on an annual basis;
 - iii) The Council, through the Head of Organisational Development, makes a formal commitment to making a target number of 3 apprenticeships per annum available to Sparsholt College or other recognised apprenticeship agencies, as an example to other employers, and that these are reported these to the Personnel Committee on an annual basis;
 - iv) The Council plays an active role in promoting both work placements and apprenticeships to other employers in the District, making information accessible and clear, and celebrating successful examples.
 - v) Officers proceed with a commission to create a Job Club in Stanmore, using seed funding from the economic prosperity commissioning budget but with the intention of establishing a self-sustaining, volunteer-based operation.
 - vi) The Council convenes a conference of arts providers in and around the Winchester District to consider opportunities for non-conventional interventions to support NEET young people, in line with the Council's stated objective of drawing on the District's cultural strengths to find innovative new approaches to supporting the local economy.
- 5.2 Members had other proposals to support young people and their families, which included peer mentoring, parent support, a help line and one-to-one coaching. However, it was agreed that these could be considered as part of the study recommended in 5.1(i) above and included in the action plan required as part of that commission if appropriate.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The subject of the ISG was directly relevant to delivery of the Economic Prosperity outcome of the Sustainable Community Strategy, in seeking to

ensure that young people are provided with opportunities to find training and employment when they leave education.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 There are no new growth implications arising from any of the recommendations of this report. All activities can be accommodated within existing budgets.
- 7.2 The proposed costs of the two commissions are identified in the Economic Prosperity Commissioning Budget:
- | | | |
|----|---|------------------|
| a) | Young People and Employment Mapping Study | £7,500 |
| b) | Stanmore Job Club
years) | £8,000 (over two |
- 7.3 The work placements have no direct cost, as they are offered on a voluntary basis, although there would be a need for supervision and potentially mentoring which has been provided by the organisation for previous schemes such as the Future Jobs Fund. However, if the protocol developed includes the payment of travel costs, this would have to be found from the sponsoring Team's existing budgets. There are also current schemes such as Wheels to Work to which young people without transport could be directed.
- 7.3 There is a direct cost associated with apprenticeships, but in the case of the two apprentices in the Customer Service Centre it was agreed that one full time equivalent post would be replaced by two full time apprentices for 12 months at a time. There is no additional cost to the Council by providing opportunities in this way and other teams could be encouraged to consider a similar concept. The report presented to Personnel Committee last June ([PER195](#)).sets out the rationale for this and suggests that, if successful, it could be rolled out more widely across the organisation. The Head of Customer Services has confirmed that the scheme has been successful so far in his experience.
- 7.4 There are other funding options, too. Earlier in the report, reference was made to the possibility of proposing some developer contributions for the West of Waterlooville Art Fund to support an apprentice. Again, there would be no direct cost to the Council. It is possible to 'share' an apprentice with one or more partner organisations, to reduce cost and increase the experience of the apprentice, and this is currently being explored by the Economy and Arts Team in collaboration with the Theatre Royal and Hat Fair. There is no intention to seek growth funding for the third apprentice proposed in the target recommended in this report.
- 7.5 The Council has powers to support proposals to help bring young people into employment under the well-being powers in the Local Government Act 2000 and has to have regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy in exercising those powers. The new power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011 when in force, will also cover such activities.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 Whilst there is a relatively small number of identified NEET young people in the District, there is a risk that this figure is growing as a result of the recession and that official agencies do not have a complete understanding of the scale and nature of the problem. Taking action at this stage will provide evidence for partnership working to make better provision for this disadvantaged group of residents.

9 EQUALITIES

- 9.1 Following a summer of unrest in some of the UK's larger cities, and more recent public protests about the growing gap between rich and poor, this is an appropriate time for the Council to be playing a more active role in supporting this group of vulnerable residents. Some of the challenges faced by NEET young people arise from personal or domestic situations, as previously indicated, which in turn reflect the fact that they belong to one or more of the priority groups considered under equalities legislation. The Council can make more informed decisions about supporting NEET young people if it is better informed, and understands more clearly the work of other agencies in this area.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Minutes of the ISG, held by the Democratic Services Team

Statistical reports produced by Hampshire County Council, held by the Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Work Programme of the *Young People and Employment* ISG

Appendix 1**Work Programme of the *Young People and Employment ISG***

- Meeting One: Planning the ISG and providing the context
Tues 26 July
- agree terms of reference / work programme
 - speaker from Job Centre Plus
 - agree Member investigations for summer
- Meeting Two: The experience of young people, and interventions available to support them
Mon 5 September
- Dave Thornton, , Director of Youth and Children's Ministry, Christ Church, Winchester
 - Debbie Dean, Team Manager (Eastleigh, Winchester), Youth Support Service, HCC
 - Ben Holloway, Business Development Coordinator, Sparsholt College
 - Clare Hobbs, County Youth Arts Officer, Hampshire County Council
- Meeting Three: The experience of young people, and interventions available to support them
Mon 19 September
- Jool Heller-Dixon, Head of Centre, and Nerissa Dean, Youth Manager, The Carroll Centre
 - Becky Pollard, Director of Services, Youth Options
 - Young volunteers from The Carroll
- Meeting Four: The role of schools, and voluntary sector support
Mon 10 October
- Jane Berridge, Enterprise Co-ordinator, Kings' School, Winchester
 - Mike Simpson, CEO, and Richard Coleman, Fundraising Officer, YMCA Winchester
 - Ben Marson, Head of Programmes for Enterprise, Awards and Volunteers, Prince's Trust
- Meeting Five: The role of schools (cont), and support for offenders
Mon 31 October
- John Winter, Communities Manager, Integrated Offender Management
 - Jill Mellor, Assistant Headteacher, The Westgate Secondary School, Winchester
- Meeting Six: Conclusions
Mon 21 November
- consideration of the draft final report to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee