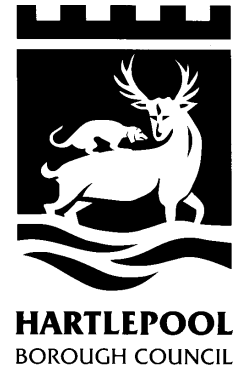


PLEASE NOTE VENUE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



7 April 2008

at 4.00 pm

in Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors S Cook, Coward, Fleet, Griffin, A E Lilley, London, Plant, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Worthy

Co-opted Members: Elizabeth Barraclough and David Relton

Young Peoples Representatives: Leigh Bradley, Hannah Shaw, Chris Lund, Kelly Goulding, and Gillian Pounder

Resident Representatives: John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
3. **MINUTES**
None.
4. **RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**
None.
5. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**
None.

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

6. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

None.

7. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

7.1 Draft Final Report - Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools – *Chair of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum (to follow)*

7.2 Draft Final Report - Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool – *Chair of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum (to follow)*

8. **ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN**

9. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting 16 June 2008, commencing at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

31 MARCH 2008

The meeting commenced at 4.30 p.m. in the Ow ton Manor Community Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

Councillors: Shaun Cook, Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Alison E Lilley, Frances London, Michelle Plant, Christopher Simmons and Gladys Worthy

Resident Representatives: John Cambridge and Michael Ward

Officers: Sandra Saint, Health Schools Coordinator
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

96. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Preece, Co-opted Members Elizabeth Barraclough and David Relton, Resident Representative Evelyn Leck and young peoples representatives Leigh Bradley, Hannah Shaw, Chris Lund, Kelly Goulding and Gillian Pounder

97. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

98. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2008

Confirmed.

99. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

No items.

100. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items.

101. Six Month Progress Report – Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Hartlepool Schools *(Director of Children's Services)*

The Health Schools Coordinator updated Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the progress that had been made in relation to the 'Provision of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Hartlepool Schools' investigation, six months after the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum made its recommendations. The appendix to the report set out the individual recommendations of the investigation and the action that had been made on each. The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that in future, the monitoring of the delivery of these actions would be delivered through the regular monitoring reports.

It was highlighted that there was only one primary school that had not taken on the use of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' teaching package, though this was being readdressed. One issue that was causing some problems was the shortage of School Nursing Support in secondary schools in particular to give the health profession input into the APAUSE package.

There was also to be a website developed alongside the printed training packages to provide resources for schools and to give parents access to information. The website would, however, be restricted to protect the Council developed training information.

It was considered that the scrutiny investigation had provided focus for this important element of children's education. Members commented that the investigation had proved to be challenging but had shown through the involvement of the young people in the investigation, the real value and need for this subject area to be treated in a fashion sympathetic to age and need. It was highlighted that for many young people the issue of relationships was something wished to receive guidance on rather than just the sex element of the subject. The Healthy Schools Coordinator indicated that that was one of the very valuable insights gained from the investigation which had been taken on-board in the delivery of the subject to young people.

Decision

That the progress report be noted.

JANE SHAW

CHAIRMAN

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

7 April 2008



Report of: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: DRAFT FINAL REPORT – SUSTAINABILITY OF EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present the findings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools'.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

2.1 The issue of the 'Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools' was accepted by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on 1 October 2007 as a referral from the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum.

2.2 The South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum had concerns regarding the sustainability of community spaces in schools where external funding streams were being used with no longer term revenue funding identified. Whilst the distinction between projects initiated by local (external) service providers and those initiated by the local authority was recognised, the Consultative Forum was strongly of the view that Scrutiny could 'add value' by exploring the issue in detail, and examining:-

- (i) What good practice currently exists for the managing and sustaining grant maintained projects; and
- (ii) How the Council's community leadership role should be interpreted in relation to these types of projects.

2.3 Given the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's congested work programme and the tight timescale for completion of this investigation, the Forum obtained funding from the Dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Budget for the appointment of an independent Sports Consultant to provide advice and information. The subsequently appointed Independent Sports Consultant

compiled a report, which was considered by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, on the 4 February 2008, and utilised by Members during the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations shown in Sections 17 and 18 of this report.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to gain an understanding of the key issues involved in sustaining externally funded community initiatives in schools and suggest areas for improvement.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The 'Terms of Reference' for the Scrutiny investigation were agreed by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 5 November 2007, as outlined below:-

- (i) To gain an understanding of the role of the local authority in relation to sustaining externally funded community initiatives in schools;
- (ii) To gain an understanding of the role of schools in relation to sustaining externally funded community initiatives in schools;
- (iii) To consider, what good practice / guidance, if any, exists for sustaining externally funded community initiatives;
- (iv) To explore the role of Sport England and other agencies as funding bodies for community initiatives in schools;
- (v) To consider how the Authority's community leadership role should be interpreted in terms of the sustainability of community initiatives in schools; and
- (vi) To identify suggestions for improvement / future management processes geared to enhancing the sustainability of community funded initiatives, in schools.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

- 5.1 The membership of the Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below:-

Councillors S Cook, Coward, Fleet, Griffin, A E Lilley, London, Plant, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Worthy

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barraclough, David Relton and Jesse Smith

Leigh Bradley, Jonathan Simpson, Chris Lund, Kelly Goulding, Cassie Jeffries and Gillian Pounder

Resident Representatives: John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

- 6.1 Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum met formally on the 4 February 2008 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.
- 6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-
- (a) Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
 - (b) Officers from the Children's Services / Adult and Community Services Departments;
 - (c) An Independent Consultant to provide advice / guidance;
 - (d) Head Teachers and Community Building / Activities Managers from Brougham Primary School, Owton Manor Primary School, Stranton Primary School, West View Primary Schools and High Tunstall College of Science;
 - (e) Ward Councillors; and
 - (f) Resident Representatives.

FINDINGS

7. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GROUPS / BODIES IN RELATION TO SUSTAINING EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

- 7.1 As a starting point for the investigation, it was important for the Forum to gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various groups and bodies involved in the provision of externally funded community initiatives in schools. This information was provided by the Independent Sports Consultant, whose report clarified the role of the local authority, individual schools and external funding agencies in the provision of externally funded community initiatives in schools.

The Role of the Local Authority

- 7.2 The Forum noted with interest the various elements of the local authority's role in relation to the provision of sustainable externally funded community initiatives in schools, as detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 7.3 Members were interested to find that under current policy whilst the Children's Services Department was responsible for the management of community use on school sites, the practical management of services / activities was delegated to individual schools.

The Role of Schools

- 7.4 Members noted the various elements of the role of individual schools in relation to the provision of sustainable externally funded community initiatives in schools, as detailed in **Appendix B**.

The Role of External Funding Agencies

- 7.5 Members learned from the information provided, that the most recent examples of external funding that had provided community use initiatives in Hartlepool had involved Sport England, The Arts Council, The Big Lottery Fund and New Deal for the Communities. Members were interested to learn that the two main benefits of funding for all projects in this way was the provision of new / improved facilities for curriculum and extra curricula activities and new opportunities for community use.
- 7.6 Whilst the Forum was concerned that the main funding received was for capital development with a limit on the amount received and the timescale for revenue cost expenditure, it was acknowledged that there is a role / benefit in involving external funding agencies are. These include the provision of:-
- (i) Support and encouragement to develop robust strategies and a clear evidence base to properly plan for sport and lever additional funding;
 - (ii) Additional funding (capital and revenue) and encourage partnership funding;
 - (iii) Support for projects for additional funding;
 - (iv) An external assessment of projects;
 - (v) Examples of good practice and advice;
 - (vi) External monitoring and evaluation;
 - (vii) Encouragement to implementation of National/Regional Policies of opening up school sites for community use;
 - (viii) Encouragement to deliver National / Regional Policies for Sports Development; and
 - (ix) A stamp of approval and credibility for projects.

8. SPORT ENGLAND'S 'THE WIN – WIN SCENARIO – COMMUNITY SPORT AND ARTS ON EDUCATION SITES'

8.1 During the course of its investigation the Forum recognised the value of advice available from external funding agency's, such as Sport England's new publication 'The Win – Win Scenario – Community Sport and Arts on Education Sites' and the advice contained within it in relation to the following areas:-

The management of initiatives

8.2 Sport England clearly identified a number of initiatives that could work where community sport and arts occurred on education sites. These areas were as follows:-

- (i) School based management through existing staff.
- (ii) Management by local authority Community Services Department.
- (iii) Management by a Trust.
- (iv) Management by Commercial Management.

8.3 For school based management through existing staff it was noted by Members that whilst it was a low cost option, careful consideration needed to be given to the approach. It was important that staff had sports and arts management experience and be given sufficient time to make it a success.

8.4 Considering management by local authority Community Services Department, Members' awareness was heightened that this is quite a common initiative for the community use of facilities on school sites. Governance is vested in a committee controlled by the school Governing Body. The management function is delivered by staff employed and trained by the Council under the terms of a transfer of control agreement often called a Community Use Agreement.

Revenue funding

8.5 Whichever the scale of the Community Sport and Arts programmes it will need funding from either a new approach to the schools delegated budget or from new internal/external sources.

8.6 At present schools can not use Delegated Budgets to support or subsidise community use activity.

8.7 However the government is making additional funding available for schools via the School Standards Grant which may assist towards the development of extended services and activities.

Capital funding

8.8 The government has committed additional funding to support schools in setting up and embedding extended services.

- 8.9 Capital funding for new and improved education buildings and support facilities has never been greater than under the Building Schools for the Future programme. Whilst these funds are primarily for facilities that support improved standards of education and will not fund spaces exclusively for community use, in every case there is a strong presumption that new facilities on school sites funded by the programme will be used to further the aims of the Extended Schools Programme.

9 GOOD PRACTICE / GUIDANCE FOR SUSTAINING EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- 9.1 In exploring a possible way forward for the delivery of sustainable externally funded community initiatives in schools, the Forum explored good practice on a local (within Hartlepool) and regional basis.

Good Practice within Hartlepool

- 9.2 As indicated earlier in the report, Members noted with interest that whilst under current policy the Children's Services Department is responsible for the management of community use on school sites, the practical management of services / activities is delegated to individual schools with little central support or control.

- 9.3 It was apparent to the Forum that the delegation of this function to schools required a considerable commitment by school management and staff. Schools were also aware / understood the impact that changes in key staff could have upon a schools ability to continue provision. Members also ascertained from the information provided that:-

- (i) Changes in key staff could leave the local authority exposed and vulnerable in terms of Council's accountability when projects were externally funded and community use was a condition of grant;
- (ii) A school specific approach could lead to use of a site within specific parameters and addressing needs of specific groups rather than adopting a local authority holistic approach. i.e. schools have a greater commitment to public access while others tend to encourage block bookings; and
- (iii) School budgets couldn't be used to subsidise community use and as true community use was not self financing there were sustainability difficulties and disadvantages.

- 9.4 During consideration of specific examples of 'best practice, the Forum learned that there was a considerable difference in the ability of secondary and primary schools to deliver community use. On a Secondary School basis, the Forum was interested to find that responsibility for the provision of staff / management support sits with individual schools, as part of a much wider portfolio e.g. Deputy Head, Director of Services, Bursar, Site

Supervisor. Within this framework, Members were pleased to learn of best practice already being implemented in primary schools by High Tunstall College of Science, through the "Life Centre" project (funded by the Big Lottery Fund) where the school had appointed a manager and there was good use by the community. Dyke House School also exhibited good practice with a strong commitment to community use of facilities and high usage figures. The Forum was particularly pleased to find that this had been recognised nationally as an example of good practice in terms of extended services and maximising the use of public facilities.

- 9.5 On a primary school basis, the Forum found that the potential for community usage was generally limited due to lack of appropriate facilities, except where there was external funding. Primary schools were also poorly placed to provide a management service and therefore effective community use could only occur where additional resources were available. Despite this, Members were pleased to learn that there was good practice in terms of primary school provision Stranton Primary School and the operation of the "Stranton Centre", which was funded by the Space for Sport and Arts Programme and New Deal for the Communities, with a dedicated Management Team funded by New Deal for the Communities.

Good Practice Regionally

- 9.6 Considering the content of the Consultant's report. Members were interested to learn of best practice regionally by Durham County Council and North Tyneside M.B.C. The Forum noted with interest good practice within Durham County Council as follows, where community use of schools is the responsibility of the Children's Services Department-
- (i) The Council had adopted a partnership approach involving the County Council, District Councils, schools and the Community that applies across all seven districts;
 - (ii) The County had implemented a "shared use" approach identifying key school sites for community use (22 schools) and had implemented formal agreements and informal agreements;
 - (iii) A Community Association, with charitable status, that raised funds to help subsidise community use had been established on each site to ensure Governance;
 - (iv) A direct service and financial support was provided to each community use school site in terms of staffing (a full time member of staff and sessional staff) and revenue funding (a contribution towards energy costs, caretaking and cleaning costs); and
 - (v) For the future the Council is addressing the additional capital funding required to maximise the potential of the Building Schools for the Future programme for community use and identifying the revenue support required.

9.7 A further example of good practice considered by the Forum was North Tyneside MBC, where:-

- (i) As the Council did not have a facility management policy for community use there were a variety of management models, generally led by funding mechanisms;
- (ii) The Council has a Leisure Facilities Strategy and has adopted a policy of basing leisure facilities on school sites;
- (iii) It is likely that with the Building Schools for the Future programme and the Extended Schools initiative the Council would need to address the Facility Management issue across all Council facilities;
- (iv) Good co-operation exists between Children's Services and Community Services and there was a strong cross departmental P.E., Sport and Physical Activity Structure;
- (v) The existing management structure for community use of schools ranges from Leisure Services managing two schools, to other schools having on-site responsibility with support from Children's Services;
- (vi) Governance is through the Governing Body of the school and Steering Groups for each site have been set up to manage community use involving the school, Children's Services, Leisure Services and the community; and
- (vii) The current "Mixed Bag" of Management options appears to work but the issue of management for community use is still on the agenda for North Tyneside particularly in view of future developments.

10. HOW THE AUTHORITY'S COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ROLE SHOULD BE INTERPRETED IN TERMS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

10.1 The Independent Sports Consultant reported to Members that the support of any Sport Development Activity should be undertaken by the Authority independently or in conjunction with partner organisations.

10.2 To aid the development of these initiatives it was vital to ensure that Community Leaders had an active and participative role in any community use that arose out of these externally funded community initiatives in schools. The active participation of Community Leaders could fall into one or more of the following categories:-

- (i) Support
- (ii) Advice and Experience
- (iii) Local knowledge and contacts
- (iv) Strategic approval
- (v) Hands on help

11. INDEPENDENT SPORTS CONSULTANT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT / FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

11.1 The Independent Sports Consultant provided Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with a number of suggestions that Members might like to consider as a way forward in relation to the issue of sustainability of externally funded community initiatives in schools. These suggestions are detailed below :-

Community Use of Schools

11.2 To be successful this requires a clear management, monitoring and evaluation process, additional administration, additional resources (Staff and Funding) and site management.

11.3 Community use initiatives are not self financing and sustainable. They require on going revenue support particularly if target groups and the socially disadvantaged are to be involved and that a true and balanced programme for community use can be offered including Casual/Pay as you Play approach.

11.4 The redevelopment and/or refurbishment of school sites is an opportunity to contribute to the consolidation of a service to provide a comprehensive package and address some of the current issues/problems.

Solutions to Issues Encountered During Investigation

11.5 To ensure true community use on a casual basis is sustainable and attract Target Groups additional on-going revenue funding will be required either to Individual schools (e.g. a community use budget) or to another management option.

11.6 If management is retained by individual schools there will be an additional work load for staff to manage and oversee the programme. This will need to be addressed in Staff Structures/contracts of work.

11.7 If outsourced to another authority department then the implications of the required additional staff and financial resources need to be recognised.

11.8 There needs to be a clear management structure within schools to achieve governance and satisfy Governing Body requirements.

11.9 Equally there need to be a central operational management support structure within the local authority.

11.10 An essential need for any community use initiative is that it should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Options for Future Management

- 11.11 It should be noted that this issue was touched on in the Strategy "Indoor Leisure Facilities for Hartlepool".
- 11.12 In the Document the point was made that there has been a shift away from Local Authority Direct Services management towards management by Private Sector Contractors and more recently by Trusts. One of the reasons has been to attract additional finance.
- 11.13 A survey of 442 Local Authorities in 2005 shows 42% ran their Leisure Services Management in-house, 20% used a Management Contractor and 20% a Trust.

Options for Leisure Management

- 11.14 The Independent Sports Consultant mapped out to Members the different options that were possible solutions to the provision of leisure management. The solutions that were outlined to Members were detailed as follows:-
- (i) **Direct Service (Community Services)**
This is often used in the Management of local authority and community use facilities. Under this arrangement full responsibility for income and expenditure, pricing, programming lies within the council as does the risk.
 - (ii) **Children's Services**
The Education Sector is another option for management of community use of schools. This is the approach adopted in Hartlepool; however, the responsibility is delegated to individual schools. It should be noted that the Children's Services Department is committed to working with other Council departments to deliver community sport in schools.
 - (iii) **Private Management Contractors**
Private contractors can be involved in leisure management contracts to local authorities. This type of approach is not currently occurring in Hartlepool.
 - (iv) **Trusts**
Not for profit Trusts are classed as social enterprise organisations and the majority of these have developed from local authorities in-house direct service organisations. Again this type of approach is not currently occurring in Hartlepool.
- 11.15 Members were informed that the Space for Sport and Arts Initiative (delivered in 4 primary schools) provided additional guidance on management options. These were detailed as:-
- (i) Direct Management by School Staff
 - (ii) Direct Management by a Governing Body Working Group

- (iii) Direct Management by a Governing Body employing a Manager
- (iv) Direct Management by a Governing Body contracting an outside Group to manage
- (v) Transfer of control to a Community Group or Trust
- (vi) Transfer of contract to a Commercial Management Group

11.16 The report to Members was that initially the approach adopted in Hartlepool was under the third option of 'Direct Management by a Governing Body employing a Manager'.

12. EVIDENCE FROM THE AUTHORITY'S PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

12.1 The Forum welcomed the views of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services at its meeting on the 4 February 2007. During the course of discussions, Members shared the Portfolio Holder's concern regarding the impact of budget cuts on this area of provision over recent years and acknowledged the importance of officers in maximising the availability of funding and its effective use.

12.2 Members were encouraged to find that the local authority provides significant support for schools through various bidding programmes for funding to enable the provision of facilities. The Forum was, however, concerned to learn that once funding had been obtained, not all schools had adequate business plans in place to ensure that sufficient income and revenue support was available to maintain facilities in the longer term.

13. EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS WHERE EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES ARE LOCATED

13.1 As part of its investigation the Forum was keen to hear the views, and experiences, of Hartlepool schools where externally funded community initiatives are located. To assist in this, a selection of head teachers and Community Building / Activities Managers from Brougham Primary School, West View Primary School, Stranton Primary School, Owton Manor Primary School and High Tunstall College of Science participated in the Forum's meeting on the 4 February 2007.

13.2 During the course of discussion with these individuals, a variety of issues were raised to the Forum and are detailed below :-

Funding and Accessibility Issues

13.3 Members were interested to learn of the real impact in terms of the economic viability of community facilities in schools, given the restriction of use during school hours and the subsequent ability of schools to maximise income.

- 13.4 Schools informed Members that often problems occurred when external funding sources set over ambitious targets or had ceased with support and advice during the funding period.

Charging Levels

- 13.5 In relation to charges for the use of community facilities in schools, the Forum acknowledged the views of many community groups in that if the usage of these facilities is to be increased charges need to be made more competitive. Tempered with this, however, Members learned that the whole costs of supporting facilities outside school hours had to be met from income generation and could not be met from school budgets.

Staffing

- 13.6 Members welcomed the views of the school representatives present and noted the significant impact which staffing costs had on the financial and practical (in terms of opening hours) viability of facilities. Members were saddened to hear that in the case of Owton Manor Primary School, such factors had been a major contributor towards the decision to close the facilities at the school.

- 13.7 Members recognised the benefits of appointing quality, experienced staff for the provision of successful community initiatives in schools and their ability to bring in new customers and expand upon the classes provided. This view was reinforced by the representative from High Tunstall College of Science where the appointment of appropriate staff had been instrumental in the success of its community facilities. Members welcomed suggestions from the school that the only way forward was to focus upon the appointment good quality staff and that in reality staff with the appropriate experience would have to come from the commercial sports sector.

14. EVIDENCE FROM HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- 14.1 The Children's Services Department reported to Members that the usage of externally funded community initiative in Schools by the local community was a very important factor. Evidence was that even successful schemes were not reflected in increased local community consumers accessing these schemes.

- 14.2 The Department also reported to Members that although a charging regime is required to ensure that these initiatives are financially viable this had proved to be a major barrier of the usage of such facilities by the voluntary sector. Members recognised that possibly some savings could be achieved through the principles of cluster arrangements, with the additional benefits of a more diverse range of facilities and venues available to interested users.

Future Support

- 14.3 Members of the Forum were delighted to hear that the Council's Children's Services Department were willing to work with schools to ensure that there was sustainability of externally funded community initiatives in schools.
- 14.4 The Department indicated to Members that ideally they would like to see a three-year plan for the sustainability of centres currently in operation, but that the Authority would need to examine closely where deficits were occurring as these could not be sustained in the long-term.
- 14.5 Members of the Forum acknowledged that there was an issue of community initiatives being self financing in nature and whether such a route was viable or indeed desirable. The Department informed Members that along with a long-term plan there was a necessity to ensure that these community initiatives had charging and concessions policies that were consistent and uniform across the Town.

15. EVIDENCE FROM HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- 15.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum were informed by the Authorities' Adult and Community Services Department that the issues faced by schools in Hartlepool trying to sustain externally funded community initiatives was not unique.
- 15.2 Members were made aware of the 'Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Investment Plan' that had been developed by the Adult and Community Services Department. This strategy was concerned about some of the issues raised about improving facilities already in existence, as well as mapping a vision of the future for BSF and a feasibility study for the H2O Centre. Members agreed with the Adult and Community Services Department's recommendations that a co-ordinated approach with common management was a route for progression of externally funded community initiatives in schools.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT SPORTS CONSULTANT

- 16.1 The Forum noted with interest the Independent Sports Consultant's view that Hartlepool Borough Council has through this investigation a tremendous opportunity to develop a strategic approach to the development, management and use of school facilities for the community. Members agreed that it was important to progress this issue as quickly as possible as the Building Schools for the Future Programme had a very tight timescale.
- 16.2 The Independent Sports Consultant informed Members that a primary recommendation would be for the Authority to undertake an audit of current

provision of externally funded community initiatives to aid the identification of key sites in the town. The number of key sites may only number four or five in total, but it was important from this baseline to identify the clusters of schools around these sites, which may be no more than half a mile, and coordinate provision within that area. Such an audit in the town would need to, in the opinion of the Independent Sports Consultant, link into the Schools Capital Programme.

16.3 The Members welcomed the detailed report from the Independent Sports Consultant and noted the recommendations within, these recommendations are detailed below :-

- (i) There is a need to consider any refurbishment of existing or development of new facilities on school sites for community use in a strategic context identifying the key strategic sites together with a hierarchy of provision for community use throughout the town, e.g. key site secondary schools supporting feeder primaries.
- (ii) There is an urgent need for the council to develop a Facilities Management Strategy for all leisure facilities.
- (iii) There is a need to adopt a clear policy and management structures for community use of schools prior to the Building Schools of the Future and Extended Schools Programmes. Currently there is no clear policy which leaves the Council exposed and vulnerable in terms of accountability. Any policy should be implemented under the Building Schools for the Future Programme with clear principles for community use of school facilities. The policy should also be an integrated element of the Extended Schools initiatives.
- (iv) There is a need for the Council to adopt a strong management commitment across departments to co-ordinate activity and resources to maximise the use of existing/new school facilities for community use.
- (v) Whilst the scope of this investigation is "Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools" it is recommended that any agreed Policies/Procedures are applied to all school sites where community use takes place.
- (vi) That any Policies/Procedures adopted should take into account and be compatible with the recommendations in Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy, the Borough Councils Sport and Recreation Strategy and the following P.P.G.17 Open Space Strategy.
- (vii) To assist schools, develop and sustain community use it is strongly recommended that the most efficient and effective way forward would be for the Council to establish a central operational and integrated management support structure to co-ordinate the overall approach. It is felt that the Council's Adult and Community Services Department, if

adequately resourced, should have a significant role to play in the process.

- (viii) The central model if implemented would have significant benefits to the Council in terms of:-
 - (a) a co-ordinated approach to management information systems, booking procedures, pricing policy, marketing, programming, performance monitoring and accountability.
 - (b) Providing the most cost effective operational arrangement and the most benefit to the whole community together with a Holistic Service delivery across the authority.
 - (c) Providing the necessary strategic approach to facility and sports development objectives.
 - (d) Pulling together all the necessary groups and agencies (internal and external) that are essential for development of sustainable community use.
- (ix) A partnership approach with schools is adopted to determine the most appropriate and cost effective management structure and operation (Direct/Indirect). Within this approach the identification of key sites and how non key sites are managed on a Cluster Basis is fundamental to the process. This brings into focus the inability of the local authority to impose procedures in individual schools.
- (x) That the importance of governance is addressed and that the appropriate Management Committee or Community Association is established on each site with representation from the school, Children's Services, Adult and Community Services and User Groups (The Community).
- (xi) That a Service Level or Community Use Agreement with Individual Schools is implemented to ensure that the facilities are operated in a consistent and complimentary manner and that there is a firm commitment to true community use involving casual and pay as you play opportunities.
- (xii) That there is recognition of the need for additional Capital Funding to realise/maximise the potential for community use within the Building Schools for the Future Programme and indeed other identified sites (the Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy identified a minimum of approximately £125,000 per key site school.)
- (xiii) That there is recognition of the importance of "Ongoing Revenue Funding". This is vital if community use of schools initiatives are to be sustainable, true community use on a Casual/Pay as you play basis delivered and if Target Groups/Disadvantaged Groups are not excluded. The appointment of qualified and dedicated staff and contributions towards running costs are essential if the programme is to be successful. (The Durham County example would indicate

something in the region of £50 – 100,000 per year per key site school; however more work would need to be undertaken on costs and management models which would be dependent on facilities, staff required and programmes of use.

- (xiv) If the Council decides to agree in principle to a new way forward in terms of the management and sustainability of community use initiatives in schools this would involve a substantial policy change which would have resource implications. To take this matter forward it is recommended that this is undertaken in incremental stages through a Joint Steering Group involving Children's Services and Adult and Community Services with a clear timescale for delivery. This may require additional resources in order to facilitate the work and meet deadlines. There is some urgency to this work to ensure policies are in place to implement under the Building Schools for the Future Programmes.

17. CONCLUSIONS

17.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That the situation in Hartlepool is not unique and is in fact experienced nationally;
- (b) That there is no immediate solution to this issue and that it was essential that a joint Steering Group be established to progress the findings and proposed recommendations of the Independent Sports Consultant;
- (c) That it was surprised to find that there are many interpretations of what would be classified as a 'Community Initiative' and that to avoid any further confusion there was a clear need for the establishment of a formal definition;
- (d) That as part of the future operational management of Community Initiatives, consideration needs to be given to the wider agenda in relation to Building Schools for the Future, Primary Capital and Extended Schools;
- (e) That based upon the evidence received there is a clear need for the development of a co-ordinated approach within the authority, mainly between Children's Services and Adult and Community Services, for the provision of sustainable externally funded community initiatives in schools;
- (f) That the success of any scheme was reliant upon marketing, take up, accessibility and the provision of effective / sufficient operational support;

- (g) That there is a dearth of leisure facilities, but an over provision of sports facilities in Hartlepool;
- (h) That accessibility problems caused by the lack of leisure facilities, are exacerbated by the limited availability at certain times of the day;
- (i) That young people can become resistant to using school based facilities for leisure activities;
- (j) That the communities surrounding externally funded community initiatives needed to be made more aware of the facilities that were currently available in their local schools;
- (k) That in order to achieve the efficient and effective running of facilities in the Town, the Council needs to ensure that the 'right' staff are in place to deliver initiatives with a possible financial cost for the Authority;
- (l) That at present there was no data available on the number of schemes operating across Hartlepool, therefore it was essential that a baseline be established to determine a way forward; and
- (m) That prior to the implementation of any externally funded community initiatives it is imperative that an audit be undertaken of their long term financial viability, by way of an outline business case.

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

18.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below :-

- (a) That a joint Steering Group between the Children Services Department and the Adult and Community Services Department be established to further explore the proposed recommendations of the Independent Sports Consultant, commissioned specifically as part of this investigation;
- (b) That all schools that currently operate community initiatives undertake a three year financial forecast and business plan of the viability of each facility that outlines charging policies, usage levels and scheme objectives;
- (c) That pending the outcome(s) of the joint Steering Group (recommendation (a) refers) immediate consideration be given to providing assistance to those schemes that are likely to encounter future sustainability issue; and

- (d) That the findings of this investigation be brought to the attention of school governing bodies to raise awareness of the issue and the proposed way forward.

19. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 19.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Councillor Cath Hill – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
Paul Briggs – Assistant Director, Resources & Support Services;
Alan Kell – Project Manager; and
Pat Usher – Sport and Recreation Manager.

External Representatives:

Dacre Dunlop (Sport Consultant);
Keith Storey - Head Teacher, Brougham Primary School;
Beverley Hewitt-Best - Head Teacher, Owton Manor Primary School;
Sharon Pounder - Centre Manager (Stranton Centre), Stranton Primary School;
Isabel Parkinson - Head Teacher, West View Primary School;
Dave Palmer - Sports Co-ordinator, West View Primary School;
John Taylor - Deputy Head, Dyke House School;
Judith Rasmussen - Regional Director, Sport England (North East);
Dave Emerson - Education and Community Manager, Durham County Council;
Angela James - Children, Young People & Learning Department, North Tyneside MBC;
Miriam Buhler-Willey - Head Teacher, High Tunstall College of Science; and
Bill White - High Tunstall College of Science.

COUNCILLOR J SHAW CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

April 2008

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Scoping Report – Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools (Children's Services Scrutiny Forum – 5 November 2007)
- (ii) Minutes from the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum from 30 March 2007 and 10 August 2007
- (iii) Children's Services Scrutiny Forum Report – Determination of Work Programme 2007/8 (11 June 2007).
- (iv) Minutes from Children's Services Scrutiny Forum from 11 June 2007.
- (v) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee Report – Scrutiny Topic Referral from the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum – 'Sustainability of Externally Funded Schools' from 14 September 2007.
- (vi) Minutes from Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee from 18 May and 14 September 2007.
- (vii) Consultants Report – Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools (Children's Services Scrutiny Forum - 4 February 2008).
- (viii) Minutes from the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 4 February 2008.

Appendix A

The Role of the Local Authority in the Provision of Sustainable Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools

- (i) Ensure that projects fit in with agreed strategies, schemes, policies and procedures and in particular the recent "Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy" which states that "Particular priority must be given to improving and developing school facilities which benefit pupil education as well as Community Sport";
- (ii) Adopt a strategic approach to the development and management of centres for community use including the identification of strategic sites at schools and a hierarchy of provision and opportunity;
- (iii) Produce a facility management strategy and determine the most appropriate and cost effective management structure to ensure the sustainability of community use on school sites;
- (iv) Co-ordinate the overall policy towards community use and develop a Team and Partnership approach with support to schools on the issue of community use of facilities;
- (v) Recognise that many schools are unlikely to have the professional sports management skills required to operate a true and effective community use policy. Therefore a key role of the local authority is to provide a central operational and integrated management support structure. Adult and Community Services, if adequately resourced, could have a significant role to play;
- (vi) Implement a Service Level or Community Use agreement with individual schools to ensure that facilities are operated in a consistent and complimentary manner and that there is a formal commitment to community use;
- (vii) Ensure that the most effective management policies and procedures are in place and are an integral part of the Extended Schools and Community Use Programme. The Building Schools for the Future Programme represents a significant opportunity to develop school facilities for both curriculum and extra curriculum use and to benefit the community. It is vital to maximise the potential that is available;
- (viii) Provide a "Holistic Service" across the authority addressing the needs of Target Groups and ensuring a balanced programme of activities;
- (ix) Provide a common pricing policy, marketing approach, booking procedures, programmes and monitoring for community use;
- (x) Advise on legal, financial and health and safety issues and contribute to the development of school business plans for community use; and
- (xi) Identify and target potential external funding agencies for Capital and Revenue funding and co-ordinate the bidding process.

Appendix B

The Role of Schools in the Provision of Sustainable Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools

- (i) Be proactive in identifying the potential for community use initiatives and ensuring that these are included in school improvement plans;
- (ii) Work in partnership with the appropriate Local Authority departments in the development and management of community use initiatives;
- (iii) Ensure that the Governing Body of the school retains overall responsibility for the use of school facilities for community use and the potential impact on curriculum and extra curricula activities;
- (iv) Agree the most appropriate management structure in partnership with the local authority and put in place a site specific management committee to address Governance with representation from the school, local authority and the community;
- (v) Produce a Business Plan and determine resources required identifying the additional workload for staff and how this might be resolved;
- (vi) Set standards and conditions for community use;
- (vi) Sign up to a Service Level or Community Use Agreement; and
- (vii) Monitor and evaluate the community use programme.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

7 April 2008



Report of: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: DRAFT FINAL REPORT – ACCESS TO RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HARTLEPOOL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool'.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 In considering a subject for investigation the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, at its meeting on 11 June 2007, explored a variety of possible options. During the course of discussions, Members acknowledged the positive impact which the provision of recreation activities has across all sections of the community. Concern was, however, expressed regarding barriers which can make access difficult for children and young people across Hartlepool. These included cost, location and transportation.
- 2.2 In recognition of the importance of this issue, Members were keen to undertake an in-depth investigation and explore possible ways of improving accessibility. The Forum established that for the purpose of this investigation recreation activities would be defined as 'those activities undertaken by children and young people, aged 5 – 19 years, in their spare time (e.g. outside school)'.
- 2.3 The Forum discovered that recreation provision could be divided into five categories (Sport, Arts and Culture, Organised Activities (e.g. Scouts and Guides), Free Play (e.g. meeting friends) and Other Activities. Recognising that an in-depth investigation of all five of these would not be possible, within this year's Work Programme, the Forum chose to focus its attention on the following categories of recreation:-
- (i) Organised Activities (e.g. Scouts and Guides), and
 - (ii) Free Play (e.g. meeting friends).

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to examine the provision of recreation facilities for children and young people in Hartlepool and explore ways of removing barriers to access.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below :-

- (a) To gain an understanding of national and regional policy/guidance relating to the provision of recreation activities for young people;
- (b) To consider, and agree, a definition of 'recreation activities' and 'young people' for the purpose of this investigation;
- (c) To gain an understanding of the recreation activities available for young people in Hartlepool;
- (d) To explore the recreation activities which young people in Hartlepool enjoy/utilise and identify the barriers to access which might exist, including transportation and costs;
- (e) To identify ways of removing any barriers to access to recreation activities for young people in Hartlepool that might exist;
- (f) To compare examples of good practice in other Local Authorities to improve access to recreation activities for young people;
- (g) To seek the views of young people and local residents, including representatives of minority communities of interest and vulnerable groups, in relation to access to recreation activities for young people in Hartlepool; and
- (h) To identify how those responsible for the provision of recreation activities for young people in Hartlepool intend to implement the 7 vision statements on participation agreed by Cabinet on June 24th 2007.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

- 5.1 The membership of the Children's Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below :-

Councillors S Cook, Coward, Fleet, Griffin, A E Lilley, London, Plant, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Worthy

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barraclough, David Relton and Jesse Smith

Leigh Bradley, Hannah Shaw, Chris Lund, Kelly Goulding and Gillian Pounder

Resident Representatives:

John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum met formally from 12 July 2007 to 7 April 2008 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-

- (a) Evidence from Ward Councillors;
- (b) Evidence from children and young people who access recreational activities in Hartlepool;
- (c) Evidence from local residents, including parents and carers of children who access recreational activities;
- (d) Evidence from the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool;
- (e) Evidence from the Elected Mayor;
- (f) Evidence from the Cabinet Member with Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
- (g) Evidence from the Children's Services Department (including the Youth Service) and Adult and Community Services Department.
- (h) Evidence from Hartlepool Young Voices;
- (i) Evidence from representatives from other Local Authorities with examples of good practice, including site visit to Middlesbrough Borough Council;
- (j) Evidence from representatives from voluntary sector groups/bodies, minority groups and vulnerable people, and
- (k) Evidence from the Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

FINDINGS

7. POLICY / GUIDANCE FOR THE PROVISION OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

7.1 During the course of the investigation, the Forum came to understand that the benefits of providing recreation activities for children and young people were considerable, in terms of developing personal / interpersonal skills, confidence building and wellbeing (both economic and physical). There were also clear benefits for parents, carers and the wider community, including improved family relations, increased participation in activity, reduced obesity, increased educational attainment and reduced anti-social behaviour.

7.2 Members found that the importance of play, and making space for it, had been the subject of campaigning and awareness raising at a national level for a number of years. Evidence provided further illustrated to the Forum the Government's commitment to providing recreation activities for children and young people and the importance of formulating policies and strategies to facilitate this. These included:-

- (i) **'Time for Play' (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)** was aimed at encouraging greater play opportunities for children and young people;
- (ii) **The Education Act 1996 (Section 507B)** required that every Local Authority in England must, so far as reasonably practicable, provide sufficient recreational leisure time activities and facilities, for the improvement of young people's well being;
- (iii) **The Youth Matters Green Paper** contained a duty for Local Authorities to secure positive activities for young people, as both a commissioner and provider, with National Standards indicating that 'positive activities' should have a broad scope with access opportunities to:-
 - (i) Volunteering;
 - (ii) Sport and recreational/cultural activities; and
 - (iii) Constructive activities in clubs, youth groups or classes.
- (iv) **The Dobson Review 'Getting Serious about Play'** was commissioned by the government to advocate and raise the profile of play across government departments. The report prompted a funding scheme for play from the Big Lottery Fund in England and Wales;
- (v) **The Game Plan 2003** was aimed at increasing significantly levels of sport and physical activity with the target of achieving 70% of the population as reasonably active by 2020;

- (vi) **'Every Child Matters'** is a shared national programme to ensure that Children's Services work better together with parents, carers and organisations to help give children and young people more opportunities and better support.
- (vii) **The North East Regional Plan for Sport and Physical Activity** had eleven priorities around sport and physical activity in the region, one of which was to improve access to all for all facilities and programmes; and
- (viii) **The Sport and Recreation Strategy of 2000** emphasised the need for a strategic overview of refurbishment of facilities or development of new facilities. This has been evident in the investment in facilities locally such as Summerhill Country Park, King George V Playing Fields, Grayfields Recreation Ground and the Headland Sports Hall.

7.3 On a local basis, Members were encouraged to find that over recent years major emphasis had been placed on the removal of barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. This has been evident in the following programmes currently being successfully delivered:-

- (i) The Swimming Development Strategy;
- (ii) The Football Development Plan;
- (iii) The Hartlepool Exercise for Life Programme;
- (iv) The Outdoor Activities Programme;
- (v) The Active Card scheme;
- (vi) The Indoor Leisure Facility Strategy;
- (vii) The Multi Use Games Area Study (Inspirational strategy to address some of the shortfall in Multi Use Games Areas); and
- (viii) The "PPG17" Open Spaces Strategy (would inform the Council and Members of gaps in provision).

8. HOW RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PROVIDED - REGIONALLY AND IN HARTLEPOOL

8.1 As a starting point for the investigation, the Forum gained an understanding of how recreation activities are provided for children and young people regionally and in Hartlepool. Members also explored the strategies in place in Hartlepool to ensure that they are as easily accessible as possible.

Regional Provision of Recreation Activities for Children and Young People

8.2 From the evidence provided by Play England, Members were shocked to find that for every acre of land given over to public playgrounds, over 80 acres are given over to golf. Also, that on average there is 2.3 sq m of public space for each child under 12 in the United Kingdom (about the same as a kitchen table).

- 8.3 Members were advised that on a regional perspective the three key challenges to providing play for children were that it needed to be free at point of access, the children needed to be free to come and go and do what they want when they're there. As a means of meeting these challenges the Forum was pleased to find that Hartlepool was one of 23 local authorities who had put a Play Strategy in place and had been successful in bidding for BIG lottery funding. Members were fully supportive of the continued development of the Play Strategy and the need for the provision of creative recreation provision, the involvement of children and young people in the development of which was vital to encourage ownership. It was also noted that Hartlepool's draft Open Space Strategy included provision for the upgrading of play facilities/areas for children with disabilities to ensure inclusion for all children. An important element of this strategy was also the involvement of young people in the development of new, or upgrading of existing, play facilities / activities.
- 8.4 The Forum noted with interest that in just the last generation, the 'home habitat' of a typical 8 year old (i.e. the area they can travel on their own) has shrunk to one-ninth of its original size.⁽ⁱ⁾ Members considered the types of play they participated in as children / young people highlighted the historical importance of free play and the types of things children / young people were no longer able to do as a result of personal safety concerns. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were 'stranger danger' issues to be considered, the Forum was pleased to find that provision would include supervision by appropriately checked personnel (Play Rangers) and would be provided on a local level within the community to encourage community cohesion and ownership. Members supported the use of Play Rangers and noted that there was a lot of work to be done, not specifically in making children safer but in making parents feel that their children are safe in the facilities /activities provided.

How Recreation Activities are Provided for Children and Young people in Hartlepool

- 8.5 Members discovered that recreation activities for children and young people in Hartlepool are provided through a variety of routes including extended schools, play schemes, the voluntary sector, the youth service and the leisure service. A summary of each of these routes of provision is as follows:-
- (i) **Extended Schools** - Recreation activities for children and young people age 5 – 19 years are delivered through a varied menu of activities, including sporting activities, and wider community access to sports, arts and ICT facilities;
 - (ii) **Play Development** - These include Summer Playschemes, a National Playday and Out of School and Holiday Care Schemes;
 - (iii) **The Voluntary Sector** - A leading provider of services for children and young people in Hartlepool, not only as providers of "open access"

activities but also "targeted and referred access". The third sector is a major provider of out of school clubs, special interest groups and holiday play opportunities. These are typically locality based and work primarily with children and young people from within that locality;

- (iv) **The Youth Service** – The Youth Service is the largest single provider of facilities and activities. These facilities / activities are provided by the Youth Service or commissioned by / to the Youth Service. The Youth Service also uses private providers (e.g. cinemas, pools, ice rinks, theatres, marina, etc). The primary aim of the Youth Service is the personal and social development of young people, and it uses facilities and activities to achieve this. The Youth Service provides open access, targeted and project work and increases access to young people by detached and mobile provision; and
- (v) **Community Services** - Offers a wide range of formal and informal sporting and recreational facilities, with in total 16 open access play areas and a variety of sports venues (including major leisure centres, satellite sites such as the Community Centres, School Sites and club sites). Partnership working with sports clubs and other organisations has been developed over the years to provide sporting and recreational activity.

- 8.6 Considering the information provided above, Members expressed concern regarding the transitional issues for children between 11 and 13, in accessing recreation activities. Members learned that transition in terms of access to leisure and recreation for this age group was a national issue and were concerned that whilst organisations set age limits with the best of intentions, or as a result of funding guidance, children develop at different rates. Members were very concerned that this often left those who mature quicker in an unsatisfactory position and were in support of identifying a way forward that dealt with each child on its own developmental merits rather than simply on an age basis.

Strategies in Place to Ensure that Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool are Accessible

- 8.7 During the course of the investigation, Members were encouraged to find that the provision of recreation activities for children and young people was viewed as being exceptionally important by the local authority. Members noted with interest that in addition to the actions outlined in Section 9 of this report, for the removal of barriers to access, a variety of strategies were also being implemented to ensure that recreation activities provided for children and young people in Hartlepool were as easily accessible as possible. These strategies covered the youth service, voluntary sector and leisure service.
- 8.8 The Youth Service:-

- (i) *Freezing of Charges* - For building based provision charges have been frozen for a number of years. At present, young people pay an annual membership of £1 and 30p every time they attend a project;
- (ii) *Flexibility in opening days and times* - Facilities are open evening, at weekends and during the holidays offering a service which does not clash with school times. "Midnight soccer" is also provided in response to demand from Asian young men, many of whom work in catering;
- (iii) *Targeting and Support of Activities to Under Represented Groups* – These groups include The Young Carer's; Salaam Girls Group; Rossmere PHAB and Asian Girls Cultural Groups; Music Group; Hartlepool Special Needs Group for Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Hartgables;
- (iv) *Facilitating attendance of Smaller Groups to Recreation activities outside Hartlepool* – When the needs of groups with low numbers cannot be met directly (e.g. Hartlepool deaf young people) youth workers are provided to transport them to activities elsewhere where they can engage in a more appropriate and meaningful way with similar groups; and
- (v) *Use of Youth Opportunity/Capital Funds* - Utilised to offer "hard to reach" young people the opportunity to get funding for activities and recreation.

8.9 Community Services:-

- (i) *Use of the Open Spaces Strategy (OSS)* - Many recreational activities (Play Areas, MUGA's, Summerhill, Skate Parks) were both free and accessible to young people and the OSS was used to assess gaps in provision;
- (ii) *Multi Use Games Strategy* - Work was already in place to address some of the shortfall in Multi Use Games Areas and although this strategy is inspirational it was to inform where provision would be prioritised should funding become available;
- (iii) *Free Sports Development Programme Places* - Development programmes in Sports Development were often free or at low cost to young people with the recent summer programme an example with activities ranging from 50p for a football camp to £20 for a three day outdoor activities adventure camp;
- (iv) *Free Swims* - The success of the recent Free Swimming Initiative in Hartlepool had resulted in the replication of the initiative this year with funding being accessed from the PCT to provide free structured swimming over the summer holiday period; and

- (v) *The Active Card for Young People* - Available free to those meeting concessionary criteria, the card had been very popular (528 young people currently had the free active card concession, and a further 208 who were holders of active card memberships).

8.10 Considering strategies implemented by the voluntary sector, Members noted that as these groups grew as a consequence of developing local need, and were often personality driven, access was easily encouraged. One issue identified was, however, the challenge of access for residents with a disability and this was being tackled. This issue was also discussed further in Section 12 of this report.

9. **BARRIERS TO ACCESSING RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HARTLEPOOL**

9.1 An important aspect of the Forum's investigation was the identification of barriers and possible ways of removing them. Members obtained this information in two ways, from existing research as identified in this section of the report, and 'first hand' through the Forum's co-opted young people and a variety of public consultation, as outlined in Section 12 of this report.

9.2 Evidence from various consultation processes outlined a variety of barriers as follows:-

(a) **Hartlepool's Play Strategy and Action Plan**

- (i) Fear of bullying, gangs, drug addicts and underage drinking in public spaces;
- (ii) Lack of safe play areas;
- (iii) The cost, and lack, of transport;
- (iv) Little or lack of localised provision;
- (v) The cost of accessing many activities;
- (vi) Lack of supervision of outdoor activities and play areas; and
- (vii) Limited access to school grounds outside of school hours.

(b) **'Things to do, places to go and someone to talk to' - National Youth Agency (2006)**

- (i) Transport;
- (ii) Information about what's on; and
- (iii) The places themselves.

(c) **Department of Children, Schools and Families' Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (July 2007)**, reflects that nationally children and young people from all backgrounds face both practical and personal barriers to accessing activities. Although disadvantaged young people are more likely to experience barriers, which include:-

- (i) A lack of awareness of what is on offer;

- (ii) Cost;
- (iii) Transportation;
- (iv) Location; and
- (v) A lack of motivation, inspiration or confidence to attend.

(d) The Secondary School Big Lottery Consultation:-

- (i) I'm too busy;
- (ii) Activities I want are not offered; and
- (iii) I don't want to stay in school for activities.

(e) User Survey

- (i) More trips;
- (ii) Better ICT equipment;
- (iv) Projects open more evenings (those only open twice per week);
- (v) More activities", as things they saw that would improve the youth service; and
- (vi) Cost was not indicated as a barrier (£1 per year and 30p per attendance), was endorsed as appropriate.

(f) Viewpoint 1000

- (i) Information;
- (ii) Transport;
- (iii) Activities being in the wrong place and at wrong times; and not being seen as 'cool'.

9.3 Members noted with interest that the barriers identified were similar regardless of the age, gender, race or religion of those asked. It was also recognised that many of the barriers mirrored those mentioned earlier in the report in terms of safety marketing / publicity for activities. This served to reinforce the Forum's support for the use of Play Rangers as a way to remove the safety concerns and the need for improve marketing of activities.

10. WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HARTLEPOOL WANT IN TERMS OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES

10.1 An issue of real importance to the Forum was the identification of what children and young people actually want, whether what was provided meets need and how they would like to see resources spent. Members noted with interest the following information:-

(a) The Primary School Big Lottery Consultation ('After School Activities'):-

- (i) 76% would like to use computers after school (78% before school);

- (ii) 84% would like to play with friends after school (85% before school);
- (iii) 63% would not like to do homework after lessons;
- (iv) 72% would like sport to be available (67% before);
- (v) 65% would stay for food after lessons (47% before);
- (vi) 76% would like to participate in art after school; and
- (vii) 65% would like to stay after school to participate in a club.

(b) Youth Service User Survey 2006 – What Young People Wanted

- (i) A place to meet with friends (19%);
- (ii) Somewhere to relax and chill out (15%);
- (iii) Sports/activities (13%);
- (iv) Trying new things (12%);
- (v) Discos/raves (9%);
- (vi) Trips/residential (8%);
- (vii) Arts and crafts (6%);
- (viii) Learn things/training (6%);
- (ix) Get certificates (5%);
- (x) Help and support (4%); and
- (xi) Other (3%).

(c) Youth Service User Survey 2006 - What Young People Said They Got

- (i) Fun and enjoyment (28%);
- (i) Confidence (14%);
- (ii) Chance to do new things (14%);
- (ii) Advice (13%);
- (iv) Motivation (9%);
- (v) Help and support (8%);
- (vi) Information on issues (5%);
- (vii) Accreditation/certificates (4%); and
- (viii) Something else (3%), nothing at all (2%).

10.2 Members recognised again that many of the issues and views expressed were reflected across age groups and the high priority placed upon the need for somewhere to go and meet friends and somewhere to relax and chill out. In addition to this, the Forum noted that the National Youth Agency document in 2006, entitled 'Things to do, places to go and someone to talk to', had shown that when considering how to spend resources young people would like to see funding allocated to the provision of:-

- (i) Support from skilled adults (38%);
- (ii) Actual activities (35%); and
- (iii) Improved access (27%).

10.3 Members also noted that the same document had shown that in terms of the improvement of access to activities young people resources should be allocated to improve:-

- (i) The quality of venues and where activities are held (44%);
- (ii) Transport (29%); and
- (iii) The provision of information (27%).

10.4 The Forum recognised the value in all of the suggestions for future development of the provision of recreation provision and from the information provided noted in particular the positive effect the provision of skilled adults would have on the provision of activities.

11. GOOD PRACTICE IN OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

11.1 As part of the Forum's remit, consideration was given to comparing neighbouring authorities activities to improve access to recreation activities for children and young people. As a means of obtaining this, Members of the of the Forum visited Middlesbrough Borough Council on the 14 January 2008 and observed 'first hand' the provision of facilities at Prissick Plaza Skate Park, youth shelters at Pallister Park and Albert Park and a 'Pod' on the Easterside Estate.



Inside and outside the 'Pod' on the Easterside Estate



Youth shelter in Pallister Park

11.2 During the course of the visit various issues were discussed and Members were interested to find that:-

- (i) In terms of the Easterside 'Pod':-

- (a) Young people played a very active role in its management and selection of activities provided;
 - (b) A key element of the success of the 'Pod' had been the appointment of two paid supervisors / Youth Workers, paid for by the Easterside Partnership, who were present at all times in the POD at all times; and
 - (c) Evidence was that the 'Pod' had a significant impact in the area, including the eradication of graffiti.
- (ii) In terms of Youth Shelters:-
- (a) Pallister Park was no longer locked on an evening and whilst every effort had been made to locate the shelter away from residents the size of the park had meant that it was still very close to houses and could be easily seen by Police and residents;
 - (b) A key element of recreation provision in the part was the provision of areas for specific age groups and the provision of a free 'Kicks' football training programme;
 - (c) No complaints were now being received and at times i.e. a Friday night could see 200 children in the park. At these times the Police Community Support Officers are on hand;
 - (d) Police support was vital to the success of shelters, both in terms of residents and young people;
 - (e) Young people had been fully consulted on the form and location of shelters;
 - (f) Indications from local Police were that the availability of facilities in the park, including the shelters, had a positive effect on anti social behaviour outside the park. There was also very little in the park;
 - (g) Evidence is that young people will travel fairly large distances to use the facilities, including the shelters;
- (iii) In terms of Prissick Plaza Skate Park:-
- (a) The employment of an Extreme Sports Officer, funded as part of the overall 'set up' costs for the site, and introduction of coaching sessions had been instrumental to the success of the site;
 - (b) Facility placed upon a neglected site with considerable consultation undertaken with young people in terms of what they wanted;

- (c) Whilst there had been concerns regarding the sites proximity to local housing, considerable work had been done with residents to allay their fears through the planning process. The result now being that although there had been some complaints early on, no issues were now being raised by residents;
 - (d) Use of CCTV cameras played significant role in the success of the site;
 - (e) There were major cultural issues in terms of the users of the site; however, the work of the staff (including maintenance staff) in conjunction with street wardens had helped to prevent problems;
 - (f) Key to the success of the scheme had been the existence of strong political and financial support.
- 11.3 During the course of the visit those Members present were impressed with the use of 'Pods' and youth shelters but were aware of the contentious nature of selecting locations for them. Despite these concerns the Forum was of the view that the use of 'pods' and youth shelters in appropriate areas should be supported as a way forward for the provision of free play'.
- 11.4 It was however, evident to the Forum from its site visit that the provision of appropriate support was vital to the success of these initiatives. As such youth workers, or similar skills adults, should be in place in the 'pod's and close working relationships created with the Police / CPSO's / Community Wardens with a view to them 'keeping an eye' on the youth shelters.
- 11.5 This view was shared by the Forum co-opted young people, with the proviso that they be placed in accessible areas with. Young people were in fact in their role on Hartlepool Young Voices going to visit the Easterside 'pod' to look into it further.

12. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 12.1 Members of the Forum were keen to engage with the community regarding barriers to accessing recreation activities for children and young people in Hartlepool. In doing this, Members received evidence from the Forum's co-opted young people, organised groups (e.g. the Belle View Centre and groups such as the Boys Brigade, Sea Cadets, etc.), the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Town's MP.

Evidence from the Forum's Co-opted Young People

- 12.2 As part of the Forum's continually innovative approach to evidence gathering, the young people co-opted to the Forum agreed to undertake an informal survey of their peers (older than 11) to ascertain their views on:-
- (a) What they like about Hartlepool;

- (b) What they think of the town's recreation provision;
- (c) How they like to spend their time; and
- (d) What the local authority could do to change young people's views on recreation provision.

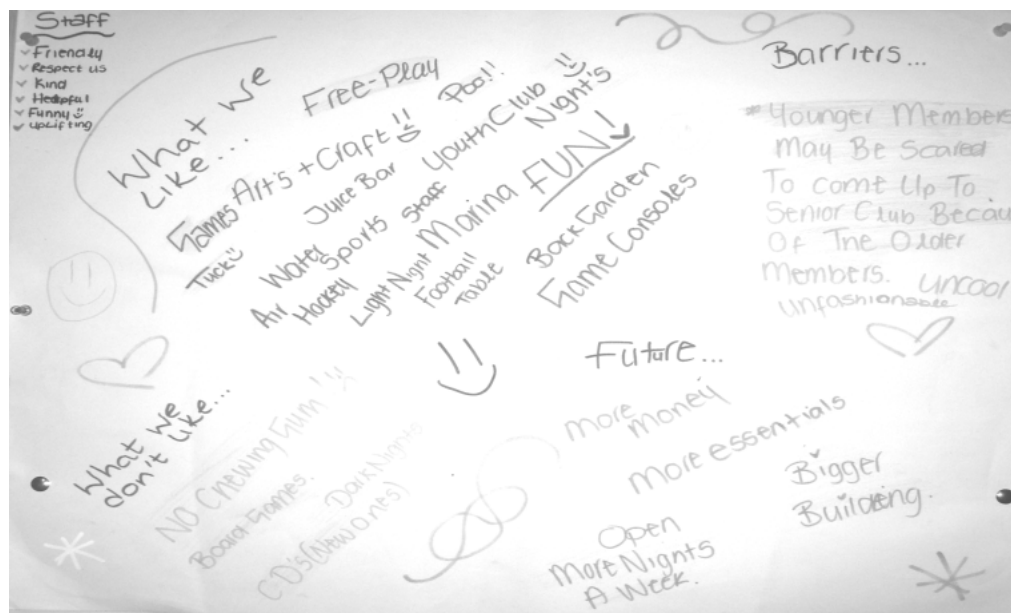
12.3 As part of this informal survey a 'mind mapping' exercise was undertaken by the young people and the outcomes of this as outlined below were presented to the Forum on the 25 February 2008:-



Presentation by the Forum's co-opted young people co-opted onto the Forum at the meeting on the 25 February 2008.

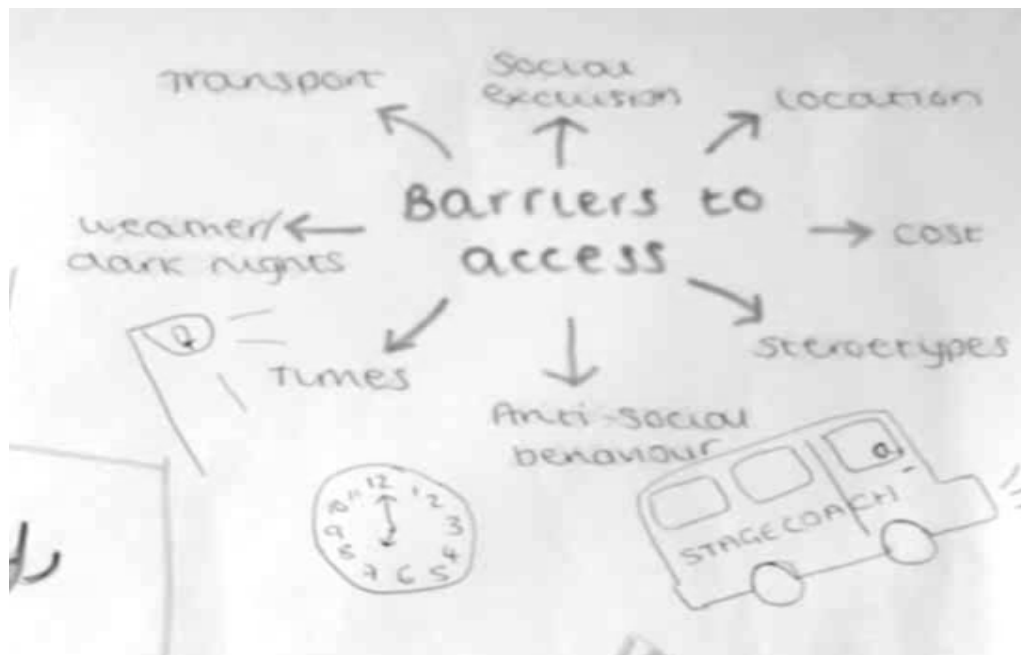
12.4 The results of the 'mind mapping' exercise illustrated to the Forum the mixed nature of views in terms of living in Hartlepool, from loving it to having nothing to do or nowhere to go. Adult perceptions were also discussed with indications that young people expect adults to think that they all cause trouble, drink and smoke. The Forum took on board these views and wasted no time in agreeing that the minority of young people cause anti-social behaviour and NOT the majority.

Mind-Mapping – What young people like to do, barriers, etc.



- 12.5 The Forum acknowledged the value of comments regarding the need for youth provision to be accessible at sensible times and for all ages and again noted the need for improved advertising / marketing of activities and the provision of trained staff. It was also recognised by the Forum that the involvement of young people in the consultation process for the provision of recreation activities was vital for future success.

Mind-Mapping - What young people think are the primary barriers to recreation activities provision



- 12.6 During the course of the presentation given by the Forum's co-opted young people, Members attention was drawn to the 7 Vision Statements on participation and consideration given to how they could be incorporated into the provision of recreation activities.
- 12.7 Throughout the investigation comments regarding the importance of young people's involvement in the consultation and decision making process had been made. Members were clear in their support for the introduction of an appropriate process to ensure that this occurs and it was agreed that the 7 Vision Statements would play an important part in this. As a way of achieving this, Members were of the view that the local authority should work with its recreation partners to ensure that the 7 Vision Statements are incorporated within the ethos of the organisations.

Evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Town's MP

- 12.6 As part of the Forum's investigation the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Town's MP were invited to give evidence at the meetings held on the 16 July 2008 and 1 October 2008, respectively. Members noted

with interest the views expressed during the course of each of these meetings, details of which are as follows:-

- (i) That Hartlepool is in reality very well served in relation to recreational activities and that the Forum should not lose sight of this;
- (ii) The key issue for consideration is the provision of locations where young people can meet in a safe, clean and warm environment i.e. the proposed smoothy bar at one of the secondary schools in the town;
- (iii) That the local authority needs to find innovative ways of providing recreation provision and consideration needed to be given to the mainstreaming of no strings attached funding for all recreational activities in order to remove reliance on short term funding arrangements;
- (iv) It was noted that young people needed appropriate levels of support when undertaking recreational activities and that a national survey had highlighted that one of the biggest factors taken into account by young people when deciding whether to undertake any recreational activity was the support offered to them; and
- (v) That the local authority had the responsibility to determine the provision of recreational activities within the Children and Young People's Plan and determine if this provision was a strategic priority, whilst ensuring appropriate resources were made available for this.

Evidence from Organised Groups and Local Diversity Groups

12.7 During the course of the investigation a variety of organised groups gave evidence to the Forum on their views regarding access to recreation activities and the issue associated with it. These included the Sea Cadets, the Boys Brigade, Eldon Grove Tennis Club, the Scouts, the West View Project and Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group.

12.8 Members noted with interest the issues raised during discussion with each of these groups. A summary of which is as follows:-

- (i) The lack of funding to the voluntary sector, the risks of staff redundancies as well as the need for Council funding was highlighted. It was suggested that the Council should ensure funding was accessible to allow voluntary organisations to continue to operate;
- (ii) The Forum supported the need for a combination of both organised and free play; and
- (iii) Attention was drawn to the problems experienced by organised group in affording to use Council facilities to provide session /events. Organisation felt that they didn't know what facilities are available and suggested that greater publicity was necessary; and

- (iv) Members noted that informal survey of organised activity providers (Guides, Scouts, etc), the results of which illustrated the downward trend in terms of numbers of young people taking part in them. Members were reassured to find that this was not unique to Hartlepool and that it was in fact a national trend.
- 12.9 Following discussions, the Forum noted with interest the organisations views on ways to improve the provision of organised recreation services / activities in Hartlepool. Members took on board a suggestion that consideration needed to be given to how Council facilities are let to voluntary organisations and possible ways of making this cheaper.
- 12.10 In relation to activities for people with disabilities, the Forum received evidence from the Chair and one of its co-opted members in terms of their attendance at a seminar "Everyone is born in..." The aim of the seminar had been to examine how young people with disabilities can be included in day to day activities and ensuring access to recreation facilities was made available. With this in mind and based upon the evidence received, Members supported the view that people with disabilities should have the option to access the same recreational activities as everyone.
- 12.11 Following on from this issue, the Forum learned that whilst there appeared to be a sufficient amount of provision in terms of recreation activities for young people with disabilities there was an issue around their advertising and parents knowing what could be accessed by their children. In view of this the Forum suggested that a way of bringing this information to the attention of parent needed to be explored.

13. CONCLUSIONS

- 13.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum concluded:-
- (a) That a good level of recreation activities are provided in Hartlepool for young people, although evidence provided showed that ways of improving the marketing of activities to bring them to the attention of young people and parents was further required;
- (b) That a more innovative approach to the provision of recreation facilities for young people, such as the use of pods and youth shelters, was required together with the introduction of a relaxed presence of the Police / PCSO's / Community Wardens and youth outreach workers in the proximity of such facilities;
- (c) That the involvement of young people in the decision making process for the provision of recreation activities was essential, particularly in the sighting of any future 'pods' or youth shelters and where appropriate should be involved in supporting the submission of applications to the Planning Committee;

- (d) That the availability of transport to access activities was an issue for young people and needed to be explored further, including the provision of free bus passes;
- (e) That emphasis was placed upon the importance of an fully inclusive strategy for the provision of recreation activities for young people, including those with disabilities;
- (f) That whilst recreation provision in Hartlepool consisted of a mixture of sports, arts and culture, organised activities and free play, attention was drawn to the importance of a balance between free and organised play;
- (g) That organised groups form a valuable part of recreation provision for young people in Hartlepool, however, ways of assisting groups to utilise council facilities, in terms of costs and access, needs to be explored;
- (h) That given today's society parents are understandably protective of certain types of recreation provision that includes an element of risk, however, there is a balance to be struck to allow young people to develop and explore their boundaries;
- (i) That the local authority has the responsibility to determine the provision of recreational activities within the Children and Young People's Plan and determine if it is a strategic priority, whilst ensuring appropriate resources are made available to ensure quality provision; and
- (j) That within Hartlepool it was evident that a negative perception exists in that the majority of young people did not respect their community, however, in reality it was found to be only a minority of individuals. Members recognised that Hartlepool's position was not unique as this was a perception that needed to be redressed nationally.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below :-

- (a) That an action plan be produced that explores ways of addressing the barriers to accessing recreation activities for young people, as outlined in the report (Section 10 refers);
- (b) That as part of any planned future recreation activities consideration be given to the use of 'pods' and youth shelters, with the close involvement of young people throughout the process from location selection to Planning application;

- (c) That further work be undertaken to increase the marketing of recreation activities to target all young people and their families, including those with disabilities, across Hartlepool;
- (d) That the feasibility of introducing free bus passes to enable young people to access recreation activities be further explored; and
- (e) That ways of supporting organised groups to secure their long term sustainability be explored.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Councillor Cath Hill – The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager;
Peter Davies, Principal Youth Officer;
John Mennear, Assistant Director (Community Services);
Mark Gwilt, Team Manager, Children's Services Department;
Pam Swainson, Social Worker, Children's Services Department;
Tracy Liveras, Young People and Play Co-ordinator;
Les Nevin, Access Officer;
Sally Forth, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator;
Andrew Pearson, Parks and Countryside Manager;

External Representatives:

Iain Wright, MP;
Officers from Middlesbrough Borough Council;
Kirsty Thompson, Regional Development Officer, Play England;
Alex Sedgewick, Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre;
Dave Wise, Rebecca Wise, Joseph Waugh, Toni Mason, Michelle Mincher, Arran Frame West View Project;
Beth Hawkrige, Nikki Pearson, Jill Bousfield Barnardos;
Stuart Thompson, Boys Brigade;
Eric Priest, Sea Cadets;
Tom Rayner, Eldon Grove Tennis Club;
Brian Carter, Scouts;
Paul Thompson, Hartlepool Families First;
Karen Gibson, Robert Clarke Hartlepool Carers Positive Futures Project;
Eileen Cockrill, Laurie Dobson, Susan Sotheran, Liz Ford, Children's Fund;
David and Veronica Gardner, Middleton, Raby Road Residents Group.

COUNCILLOR J SHAW

CHAIR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

April 2008

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Scoping Report – The Availability of Affordable Good Quality Rented Accommodation in Hartlepool (Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum – 12 July 2007);
- (ii) Delivering Affordable Housing (Communities and Local Government – November 2006);
- (iii) Review of Housing Supply (Kate Barker – www.barkerreview.org.uk);
- (iv) Hartlepool Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2006-11;
- (v) <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/>;
- (vi) <http://www.core.ac.uk/core/#> (Core - Continuous recording System) monitors social landlord's lettings and sales in England.);
- (vii) <http://www.hqnetwork.org.uk/> (The Housing Quality Network is a network of local authorities, registered social landlords and housing associations which seeks to promote good practice and quality in the provision of rented accommodation in the UK.);
- (viii) Hansard Speech by Iain Wright on the 18 June 2007 (and Ministerial response); and
- (ix) Hartlepool Housing Needs Assessment
- (x) Blyth Valley Borough Council Scrutiny Report – Access to Leisure for Young People (2004);
- (xi) Youth Service Strategic Priorities, Needs Assessment for Operational Plan 2007-2008;
- (xii) Borough of Telford and Wrekin Scrutiny Report – Review of Youth Facilities (2004); and
- (xiii) Children's Services Scrutiny Forum Report – Determination of Work Programme 2007/8 (11 June 2007).