

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011**

### **REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

#### **BIRKENHEAD YOUTH ZONE**

---

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report to Cabinet is an update on the exploratory work undertaken with Merseyside Fire Authority, stakeholder youth organisations, the charity Onside, colleagues from Merseyside Police and officers from Wirral Children and Young People's Department (CYPD). The report outlines progress to date. Cabinet are asked to approve the request to progress to the feasibility stage of this project and receive a further report when this has been completed.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 As part of the then government strategy for youth services, the My Place initiative was launched in spring 2008. The My Place scheme provided local authorities with the opportunity to bid for funding to develop a world class youth facility in their area. Wirral applied for My Place nominating Shaftesbury as its preferred option. The submission to My Place was part of the local policy decision taken by Cabinet on 23 November 2008 to reconfigure the Youth Service to a model of Hubs and satellites. Each District would have a Hub and a number of smaller satellites or clubs. Unfortunately, the Authority was not successful in receiving capital funds; however, Shaftesbury was identified as a youth hub.
- 1.2 The model used as an exemplar of a My Place project was the Bolton Lads and Girls Club (BLGC). The team responsible for the development of BLGC later set up a Charity called Onside and the charity made a number of applications to MY Place and was awarded contracts to develop youth facilities in Carlisle, Oldham, Blackburn and Manchester
- 1.3 The projects developed by Onside have a specific funding model which estimates running costs to be £1million. This revenue is met by; the local council being responsible for 40% (this is brokered by the Council with contributions coming from partner organisations such as the Police and Health) In the case of the Council's contribution this would be met by either new growth or from existing funds. The facilities are open 52 weeks a year, seven nights a week. During holiday periods, the facility is open from 8.00am to 10.00pm. Underpinning the project is the requirement for it to be youth led in programme planning and delivery. Locations for these facilities have to be neutral and fully accessible to public transport.
- 1.4 In February, following a visit by Onside to Birkenhead Youth Club Onside were invited to meet with officers from CYPD, colleagues from Regeneration, Shaftesbury and Birkenhead Youth Club and an officer from Merseyside Fire Authority. The meeting on 17 June provided an opportunity to explore the funding model, the principles underpinning the running of youth facilities supported by Onside and the type of locations required.
- 1.5 A key partner in the provision of the Youth Offer on Wirral is Merseyside Fire Authority. The Wallasey Youth Hub is based in Wallasey Fire Station and the Fire Service has an excellent track record in its engagement projects with young people.

There is a planned Private Finance Initiative to redevelop Birkenhead Fire Station, the new build will free up a large site and the Fire Authority have enquired if Wirral Council would be interested in building a new youth facility on the site. The site has other advantages in that it is neutral and fully accessible to public transport.

- 1.6 These developments are inline with the ongoing assessment of the delivery of the Youth Offer on Wirral. In July this year as part of a programme of review of youth services, a Stocktake Event was organised. The aim of the Stock Take was to review the range of the Youth Offer and to start to identify next steps. The event was attended by approximately 35 people representing the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector, the Fire Authority and council departments including Children and Young People's Department and Elected Members. The event was facilitated by a representative from My Place who took responsibility for the compilation of the action points agreed by the participants (Appendix One). In relation to this report, there was a recommendation that consideration should be given to the development of even better youth facilities on Wirral. All the action points from the Stocktake have been developed into an Action Plan which has been approved by Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee.
- 1.7 To progress the understanding of such a facility as envisaged by My Place, a visit to BLGC was organised for 5<sup>th</sup> October. This provided representatives of management committees, colleagues from CYPD and the Fire Authority, elected members and young people with the opportunity to see the potential of such a facility. The group involved in the visit completed a questionnaire reflecting the strengths and challenges presented by such a project, this can be found at Appendix Two.
- 1.8 On 18 October a steering group with representation from stakeholders, statutory bodies and Wirral Council met to discuss the next steps. There was a general agreement to pursue the possibility of developing a youth facility at the Fire Station. In addition there was also agreement that permissions from the Council, Fire Authority and voluntary organisations had to be secured. Plus the impact of such a development on other youth facilities required more consideration.
- 1.9 The follow up actions agreed were as follows:
  - Support from the My Place Support Team is requested to help develop a vision for this and youth services on Wirral.
  - One to one conversations take place with different partners as a means of identifying the concerns relating to the project.
  - Reports to be prepared for the necessary committees to secure their support to progress with this project. This would involve the Methodist Church, Merseyside Fire Authority Strategic Asset Committee and Wirral Cabinet Committee.
- 1.10 The feedback from discussions with partners is attached as Appendix Two. However the main issues raised are listed in the table below. The concerns listed in the table will be discussed in the steering group and the outcomes incorporated into the project plans. Wirral will also be asked to respond to some of the concerns in relation to youth club covenants, assistance with young people and the need for accessible transport.

<b>Positive Comments</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>What would help</b>
Involvement of Private sector in planning, development and operation of youth facility	Need clarity about Wirral council's position.	Statement from Wirral Council outlining what assistance is available and its role in the project.
We are supportive of the proposal and can see the benefits for young people	If the project is implemented, staff would be re-deployed to cover gaps created by funding requirements. This would leave management committees with empty buildings to run	Wirral Council support management committees to lift restrictive covenants on affected youth club premises as appropriate.
	Older young people would attend new facility and leave youth club for younger young people – currently the age group for the centre is 13-19.	Support from Wirral Council to help work with this age range.
	Transport to the new centre is essential if young people are to be able to access the facility.	Discussions with transport companies to ensure transport routes are in place to enable young people to access the centre.
Great opportunity for young people to have top class facilities which is also a place for young people only.	Charing Cross to be able to play a part in the organisation in planning for and operation of the new facility.	Charing Cross to have representation on the Steering Group and also on the project planning group.
	The new organisation takes account of the Methodist Organisation's vision for youth work.	The Methodist Vision for Youth work to be part of the overall vision of the partnership/ facility. Role for Pioneer Minister to be involved in the new facility as support for young people.
	Charing Cross will be contributing its site to the development and will require a site for worship.	Place on or near to this site for a church large enough to hold 100 people.

- 1.11 This report, seeking cabinet support, is presented, as required by the third action agreed at the meeting on 18 October. Merseyside Fire Authority has agreed to the request to further explore the possibility of developing a youth facility in Birkenhead. The management group of Charing Cross Church has agreed to take a report to their governance body requesting permission to continue with this project. Discussions will take place with Onside if this request is supported by Cabinet.
- 1.12 If Cabinet, Merseyside Fire Authority and other Stakeholders were in agreement with this project, Onside would form a charity to take the project forward.

## **2. Risk Assessment**

- 2.1 This will be a voluntary sector led and managed initiative requiring some revenue support from Wirral Council. The financial risk is predominately with the Charity which will be established to take the project forward. The risk will be to the Council's reputation if it were not able to meet any contractual obligations it might enter into with the new charity. If developed, this project would provide a strong focal point where young people from across Wirral could meet and take part in positive developmental activities. The opportunities presented by this development will enhance the Council's reputation in supporting new initiatives to improve service provision.

## **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There would be revenue and capital financial implications for Wirral Council. The revenue requirements are outlined in section 1.3 and in respect of the Council's contribution this is expected to be in the region of four hundred thousand pounds. The Capital expenditure is estimated to be up to £5 million. In other Onside developments this would be funded from public, private and voluntary sector contributions. Mersey side Fire Authority has indicated that it will not be charging for the use of the land.

## **4. Staffing Implications**

- 4.1 There would be staffing implications if staff were seconded as these may have to be found in existing projects. However given the central location of this facility it would be desirable to locate staff where they might be more effectively deployed.

## **5. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 Through its nights of operation and range of programme provided, this facility will seek to promote equal opportunities. The BLGC provides opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles and the development of such a facility in Birkenhead would have a positive health impact.

## **6. Community Safety Implications**

- 6.1 Community safety would be enhanced as a result of this facility.

## **7. Local Agenda 21 Implications**

- 7.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **8. Planning Implications**

- 8.1 The site is designated as Primarily Commercial Area in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) saved by direction of the Secretary of State in September 2007. Any future planning application would be assessed for compliance with UDP Policies RE10 'Criteria for Community Centres and Facilities' and SH6 'Development Within Primarily Commercial Areas', which direct community faculties that are intended to serve wider catchments towards urban commercial locations and contain criteria to protect the neighbours amenity.

## **9. Anti-poverty Implications**

- 9.1 Entry fees would be agreed in line with recognition of the income levels of families and individual budget pressures.

## **10. Social Inclusion Implications**

- 10.1 This product through specific targeted work would promote social inclusion.

## **11. Local Member Support Implications**

- 11.1 Although this project will be located in Birkenhead it is anticipated that in line with the Bolton experience, young people would travel from across Wirral to access the project.

## **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1 Report from Stock Take Event

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That

- (1) Cabinet agrees to further work being undertaken in order to investigate the feasibility of this facility.
- (2) To avoid duplication in the development of youth provision on Wirral, membership of the Steering Group should reflect the range of partners involved in developing the Youth Offer on Wirral.

**David Armstrong**  
**Interim Director of Children's Services**