

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>“ELLIE” THE YOUTH BUS EVALUATION AND FUNDING 2007-2008</b>
<b>TO/ON:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 2007</b>
<b>BY:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>STRONG COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>STATUS:</b>	<b>REPORT</b>

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Executive of the results of the Youth Bus evaluation and to seek approval to continue funding from Usable General Fund Reserves.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The idea for “Ellie” came from the young people of Derwentside and was based upon best practice developed elsewhere in the region. “Ellie” developed as a project in response to consultation held in 2003, when young people identified the need for a mobile youth provision in the District.
- 2.2 The Bus was commissioned through Building Safer Communities funds allocated by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), the aim being that the Youth Bus targets hot spot areas of youth nuisance on the basis of priority analysis that is provided through the Young Persons Task Group.
- 2.3 In addition, the Bus offers a resource through which wider youth consultation can be undertaken and information distributed. “Ellie” is currently aimed at providing a wide range of diversionary activities and resources for all children and young people across Derwentside.
- 2.4 Activity offered by the Bus during these sessions includes:
- . Access to the internet;
  - . Use of DJ equipment;
  - . Playstations;
  - . Television and videos; and
  - . A wide range of games.
- 2.5 Additionally, the Bus staff provide a range of information sessions, including healthy eating, drugs and alcohol and sexual health.
- 2.6 “Ellie” is staffed as follows:
- Youth Bus Development Worker (Full Time Qualified Youth Worker);
  - One Full Time trainee Youth Worker; and

- One Part Time unqualified Youth Worker.

- 2.7 The above resource is employed to operate the Bus for its standard programme of targeted ward visits on 4 nights a week plus a series of ad-hoc projects. Two youth workers are needed at all times to operate the Bus for health and safety reasons. In busier areas (where 30 – 40 young people visit the Bus on a night) three workers are needed. In addition, the full time youth workers do not only work on the Bus on a night as they are responsible for planning and preparing the various activities and/or educational sessions delivered on the Bus. They also plan and deliver activities which are taken forward with young people attending the Bus sessions (some examples are given in section 3.2). They also attend partnership meetings (e.g. Young Person's Task Group or project development working groups) as well as local public meetings at the request of Councillors, Youth Engagement Service or other partners. They also give presentations to schools regarding the Youth Bus and its activities, or take the Bus to schools on a morning as part of various consultation exercises.
- 2.8 A preliminary, internal evaluation of the project was undertaken in 2005 and provided some very positive feedback from both partners and users.

### **3. A SUMMARY OF THE YOUTH BUS WORK TO DATE**

- 3.1 Over the last few years, through various community appraisals as well as youth consultations, there has been clear evidence of the "lack of things to do" for young people in Derwentside (a picture similar to that across County Durham). The overall number of young people attendances on the Youth Bus is a clear indication of this need. In the period March 2005 – February 2007 the Youth Bus had over 14,000 attendances and all wards in Derwentside have benefited, to a greater or lesser extent, from its presence.
- 3.2 More importantly, however, the Bus has been a very important resource in targeted community safety work. A few notable examples are the following:
- targeted work carried out with YMCA at Burnhope;
  - the work with "hard to reach" young people at Stanley Town Centre in partnership with the Police. This led to a reduction in youth nuisance around the Bus station;
  - the Motorbike training for 10 "hard to reach young people" in collaboration with the Police.;
  - the production of "WASTED", a very successful film which is an educational resource around drugs & alcohol issues, currently used by local schools;
  - the Howtown Residential for a mixed group of 40 Consett and Stanley young people (to break barriers) in partnership with the Police;

- the current Active8 programme for Catchgate which is planned to be delivered up to June 2008. As part of Active8, the Bus provides the focal point for joint work from the YMCA, SPAN, and the Police led Eddy project for 30 young people in Catchgate;
- Alcohol and Drug awareness, Healthy eating and anti-smoking sessions, delivered in partnership with the PCT;
- the Bus being a C-card distribution centre towards promoting safe sex and tackling teenage pregnancies;
- the Bus being a consultation tool for thousands of young people across local schools e.g. 1,600 young people offered their opinions for the new Sports Complex in Consett, and 2,000 had a say for the development of the Derwentside Youth Strategy.

**3.3 Contribution to Corporate Objectives (priority objectives are in bold).**

3.3.1 The tables below outline the main contributions of the Youth Bus to corporate objectives. Due to the nature of its mobile provision and the targeting of “hard to reach” young people the Youth Bus mainly contributes to the priority Corporate Objectives CS.2. and C.5.

<b>CS. 2. “.addressing anti social behaviour”</b>	Via targeting CSP identified “hotspots” and carrying out diversionary work
<b>C.5. Ensure that the Council’s services are fully accessible..... regardless of race, age, .... Geography</b>	Due to its mobile nature the Bus targets wards with lack of youth provision

3.3.2 In terms of addressing anti-social behaviour the Bus has run on behalf of the Community Safety Partnerships’ Young Person’s Task Group various programmes of targeted work at youth nuisance hot-spot areas, and where it has visited, youth nuisance has reduced, a fact supported by both anecdotal evidence and police statistics. Data available for 2005-2005 showed a much greater reduction in youth nuisance in Bus targeted wards (-18%) compared to other wards in Derwentside (-7%). Unfortunately current Police statistics do not record youth nuisance statistics separately, but additional (statistically significant) evidence from the BVPI General Survey indicates that respondents in wards not visited as part of the Bus’s targeted programme see “teenagers hanging around the streets” as a bigger problem than in areas targeted by the Youth Bus.

3.3.3 The Police awarded the Bus a SteetSafe Award 2006 for its work, whilst the Bus has been an integral part of the Council’s Beacon Award for Positive Youth Engagement (the examiners described it as the best youth bus they had seen).

3.3.4 However, there are other corporate objectives (both priority and non-priority) to which the Bus makes a positive contribution.

<b>Objective L.1. “Deliver a learning community by supporting initiatives which contribute to improvements in educational attainment and skills levels</b>	Through training activities provided as part of the Bus’s work (e.g. Approved Motorcycle Training, Youth Work Volunteering/Trainees)
<b>EX.1. Demonstrate strong community leadership by encouraging greater community involvement in the planning, delivery, monitoring and review of local services</b>  C.1. Increase the community’s opportunity to influence decisions	Via the Bus’s role as a consultation tool. Planning for example consulted 1,600 young people for the new Sports Complex, whilst 2,000 young people were consulted as part of developing a Derwentside Youth Strategy
CS.3. Reduce the adverse impact which drugs and alcohol have on individuals and communities in Derwentside  H.2. Support initiatives which address health inequalities between Derwentside wards	Via the health awareness drug and alcohol sessions delivered on the Bus. In addition anti-smoking work and healthy eating sessions are delivered on the Bus. “Ellie” is also a C-Card registered centre in partnership with the PCT. Finally, special projects are delivered with and for young people e.g. the WASTED DVD which is to be followed by a Smoking related video currently planned in partnership with PCT and Cap-a-Pie

3.3.5 In terms of wider strategic links, the Youth Bus contributions to the Community Strategy and the statutory Every Child Matters Agenda, as indicated in the Youth Bus Evaluation report, are detailed in Appendix 2.

#### **4. THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION**

4.1 A preliminary evaluation of the Bus was undertaken internally and showed positive results from the Bus’s work. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggested that “Ellie” was increasingly gaining a higher profile amongst both young people and the wider community and partners. However, annual funding decisions were causing uncertainty amongst both staff and users. It was therefore decided to undertake an independent evaluation, the aim being to independently establish the benefits of the Youth Bus and use this evidence for potentially mainstreaming “Ellie”.

4.2 The SPICE project funded the evaluation of the Bus through Positive Youth Engagement Beacon funds, since the Bus was an integral part of the Council’s successful application. In addition, the findings would contribute to the Council’s continuing dissemination of good practice in youth engagement.

4.3 The Policy Unit invited Executive Members (Deputy Leader, Strong Communities, Community Safety, Learning), the Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Officer and representatives of a number of partner organisations (e.g. Police, County Council, Children and Young People’s Planning Group, LSP) to form an evaluation panel. This panel judged the competitive tenders from 14 consultancy companies and in November 2006, ERS was commissioned to

undertake the evaluation. The Panel was also involved in meeting the consultants both at the start of the evaluation and at interim stage. ERS submitted the Draft Evaluation report on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

The report is available in the Members' Library, however, below are the main summary points as they appear in the evaluation report:

- “The project is extremely well regarded, in high demand from stakeholders and young people, and is delivering good work across the District .The popularity of the Bus with young people consulted is clear and also evidenced by a growing free membership scheme;
- All respondents praised the commitment, enthusiasm and skill of the Bus staff, particularly with regard to their relationship with the Bus users. The quality of activities provided was also highly commended;
- Responses from young people demonstrate the value of the Bus and the activity provided, both in terms of immediate and short term impacts (things to do, evening activities) and also few but important examples of distance traveled by some young people (self-reported change in behaviour);
- There is a need for clear, unambiguous guidance on the most appropriate model to respond to the clear demand. In this respect, key considerations for the future are as follows:
  - Is it a general youth resource for the whole District?
  - Is the purpose to focus on diversionary activities to targeted groups of young people?
  - Should the Bus focus on delivery on rural areas of the District, which have a consistent lack of youth provision?

4.4 There is a need for strategic mapping of provision throughout the District, with gaps in service identified and appropriate responses commissioned, with “Ellie” as a key part of this. The Children and Young People’s Planning Group, which it is understood will be responsible for commissioning services in future as the Local Children’s Board, is a key group through which to map and plan appropriate provision.”

## **5. THE FUTURE OF THE YOUTH BUS**

5.1 The Youth Bus is in high demand and has been a valuable resource for Derwentside in many ways, whether as a leisure/diversionary activity, an educational and ICT resource centre, as well as a "targeting hotspots" response vehicle. There is also some untapped potential for Bus usage for other services. We have been actively discussing with Revenues and Benefits the idea of potentially using the Bus on free mornings to support their Benefits Take-up campaign. Furthermore, potential changes as a result of the forthcoming joint Cashiering/Neighbourhood Offices review with Derwentside Homes highlights the need in the short to medium term for the Council to

consider its Access to Services arrangements; in which the possibility of the wider use of mobile facilities will inevitably be a possible option.

- 5.2 To date the Youth Bus has been funded on a yearly basis, thereby resulting in uncertainty both amongst its staff, as well as partner organisations who were already making plans to use the Bus in the future. Needless to say that the young people themselves were always concerned as to whether the Bus would return in their area.
- 5.3 Now that the evaluation is completed, it is possible that the Council and its partners give consideration to the question of whether the Bus should be mainstreamed (or not) into their targets. Clearly, given the stage on the budget process, this is not possible for 2007/08 and Members are requested to consider use of the Council's General Fund Reserves for the forthcoming financial year with a view that the review's findings are incorporated for consideration into mainstream budget cycles for 2008/09 onwards.
- 5.4 The Budget is attached as Appendix 1. As can be seen over 2007-2008, the bus will need £73,034. The proposed package comprises a maximum of £33,000 (or 45 %) of District Council funds, £35,000 (or 48%) of partnership funds and £5,034 (or 7%) of funds to be raised by the Youth Bus team. Funding bids are still outstanding for the bus with a scope of other agencies that might reduce the call on Council reserves.
- 5.5 In considering this report it is important that Executive Members give due regard to the timing of the request for additional funds and the amount of usable balances currently available. With regard to timing, the 2007-08 budget was considered and confirmed on 27<sup>th</sup> February and the balancing of that position required the use of approximately £963,000 of projected balances. Growth bids were considered as part of the process and a prioritisation process was agreed through Scrutiny whereby only bids with a three star rating were approved, these bids contributed directly to objectives on the Corporate Improvement Plan. The Youth Bus was rated at two stars as contributing to Priority Objective CS 2 'addressing anti social behaviour'. No bids of that ranking were agreed. However, the relevant report notified members that the Youth Bus was under an independent evaluation. It should also be noted that as shown in paragraph 3.3. of this report, the Youth Bus contributes to a number of other Priority Objectives. The budget paper also showed that after all known commitments the council only had approximately £150,000 of usable general reserves available. If Executive Members are minded to support this project they need to consider how any amount agreed will impact on those available balances and the level of flexibility to fund other issues over the coming year.

## **6. OPTIONS**

The independent review of the Bus was very positive. It showed that the Bus is a well used resource which provides a holistic service to children and young people and both young people and partner agencies value it. It also showed that the Bus has had a positive effect in reducing youth nuisance. Whilst it has

never been expected that a single project could solve Derwentside's issues of youth nuisance and anti-social behaviour, the statistics highlighted in this report, illustrate that the Bus is making a useful contribution to addressing them. The review did pose the question of focus for the Youth Bus activity and it is envisaged that the Youth Bus will give greater priority to high youth nuisance areas in the coming year. The main options relating to funding for the future operation of the Bus are outlined below.

- 6.1 **OPTION 1.** The Council commits funding for 2007/08 as per proposed Budget from General Reserves and longer term funding is considered as part of the 2008/09 budget process. This means that up to £33,000 is committed through usable General Fund reserves for 2007-2008 depending on possible contributions from other partners.
- 6.2 **OPTION 2.** The Council does not commit to the proposed funding package and the Youth Bus is mothballed until other funds are available to support its operation. This option will naturally have a negative impact in terms of positive outcomes for young people in Derwentside. Stopping the Bus will be detrimental for a number of community safety targeted partnership activities (e.g. Active8 Catchgate, and the current plans for targeted work at Oakey fields), whilst it will also deprive young people from an educational/leisure and consultation resource.
- 6.3 **OPTION 3.** Another option would be to operate the Bus part-time on the basis of the funds available. This option would have staffing repercussions since the current experienced and committed full time staff would most probably leave (as they would be working on a part-time basis). Equally, the Bus would not deliver the same level of service. The evaluation did show that the bus is in high demand which is actually not fully satisfied. Operating the bus part-time would create even more demand and leave a number of young people without a service. The school-based consultation activities would also suffer, whilst the Bus would not be flexible as flexible to respond to local targeting of hotspot areas on partners request.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive approve Option 1 but that Members note paragraph 5.5 and the fact that the flexibility to fund other issues over the coming year will be diminished.

## APPENDIX 1. YOUTH BUS BUDGET 2007-2010

<b><u>Youth Bus Budget</u></b>	<b><u>2007-08</u></b>
Salaries 1 full time post SO1	33,417
Scale 1 full time worker	12,643
Scale 1 P/T support worker	5,150
Training	1,500
Advertising / Publicity	2,000
Running Costs	3,500
Activity Budget	2,500
Management costs	7,323
Renewal Costs	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73,034</b>
<b><u>Youth Bus Funders</u></b>	<b><u>2007-08</u></b>
Derwentside District Council	33,000
Partnership Funds	35,000
Project raised Funds	5,034
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73,034</b>



## APPENDIX 2. YOUTH BUS LINKS TO COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND OTHER STRATEGUC DOCUMENTS

### Derwentside Community Strategy (Draft 2006)

Outcome	Description	Contribution of activities delivered through “Ellie”
Be Healthy Outcome 1.3	Promotion of healthy living and eating.	Preparation and eating sessions offered through the Bus, partnership working with Community Nutrition Assistant.
Be Healthy Outcome 1.4	Substance misuse services for young people and parents.	Drug and alcohol awareness sessions delivered, production of the ‘Wasted’ video, partnership working with NECA. Specific action identified in the Community Strategy in relation to “Ellie” the Youth Bus continuing to deliver information / advice / guidance in relation to the dangers of tobacco / alcohol / drugs.
Enjoy and Achieve Outcome 1.13	Services and resources are made equally accessible to all individuals in the community.	“Ellie” delivers a range of activities in the areas of most need / least provision for young people.
Make a Positive Contribution Outcome 1.17	To actively engage children and young people.	“Ellie” offers a conduit through which children and young people can be engaged in a variety of activity, as well as offering opportunities for them to voice their opinions and concerns.
Make a Positive Contribution Outcome 1.20	To identify local need in relation to crime and disorder issues.	Close consultation with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and Young People’s Task Group in relation to appropriate locations for the delivery of diversionary activity. Evidence of reduced youth nuisance as a result of delivery (18.3% Programme Average reduction 2004 to 2005).

**Derwentside Children and Young People's Planning Group Framework  
(October 2005)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Description of success</b>	<b>Contribution of activities delivered through "Ellie"</b>
Be Healthy	There is a reduction in the teenage conception rate. There is a reduction in smoking, drug, alcohol and other substance abuse.	Sexual health awareness sessions delivered, partnership working with the Sexual Health Outreach Worker. Raising aspirations of young people through positive role models and peer discussion. Drug and alcohol awareness sessions delivered, production of the 'Wasted' video, partnership working with NECA.
Stay Safe	There is increased safety in public places. There is reduced crime and reduced fear of crime.	Diversionary activities offered by "Ellie" in the areas of highest reported 'youth nuisance'. Although, contradictory views as to whether the Bus might inadvertently contribute to increased fear as it brings the young people to congregate in one place.
Make a Positive Contribution	There is a reduction in youth offending.	Although cause and effect is difficult to establish, the activities delivered by "Ellie" offer diversion away from inappropriate and criminal behaviour, particularly when targeted on 'hot spots'.

**County Durham Children and Young People's Plan (2006-2009)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Contribution of activities delivered through "Ellie"</b>
Children and young people to access safe play, learning and leisure facilities	"Ellie" offers mobile leisure and learning facilities, which can be taken to the most appropriate locations and for those children and young people in most need
Children, young people and their families to join in with community activities, say what they need and see the results	"Ellie" has been taken to schools and other events in order to deliver activities and gather opinions about the local area
Children and young people to be safe from bullying, crime and anti-social behaviour	Like other youth provision in the District, "Ellie" offers a safe environment in which children and young people of various ages and from various locations can come together and socialise in a space which becomes their own.
A positive image of children and young people to be promoted so they feel respected in their communities and by service providers	Whilst there is evidence of variable perceptions, "Ellie" encourages positive engagement of service providers and the wider community with children and young people. Children and young people are offered the opportunity to have their say through "Ellie".