

Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities

1 September 2003

Carrier Bag Culture: Progress Report

Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update about progress in relation to Carrier Bag Culture Working Group.

Background

2. The Carrier Bag Culture Working Group reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2002. At that stage, the Working Group had come to the view that an officer working group should pursue some of the issues raised by this investigation.
3. To an extent, this project had to be accommodated within the agenda of the Community Safety Partnership which sets priorities in relation to initiatives in the Easington area relating to disaffected young people.
4. Whilst the working group's investigation provided some tensions in relation to priorities, it was still possible to pursue a number of issues within the overall priorities set by the Community Safety Partnership.
5. In particular, the young people engaged by the Working Group had identified transport as an issue and after a number of discussions with the transport section in the Environment and Technical Services Department, funding was secured for a bus to take young people from Thornley and surrounding villages to Blackhall on Friday evenings. Also, a bus to take the young people to a disco called 'Breathless' at Blackhall on Wednesday evenings has been pursued.
6. As a result of efforts from the working group, a number of meetings have taken place with officers to seek to make progress to achieve some of the wishes expressed by the young people. In particular, a meeting took place in June attended by four young people who expressed their views about the sort of facilities which they would like locally.
7. The young people were not in favour of a youth shelter (a basic facility to provide a meeting venue). The young people preferred a more traditional facility. Longer term, there was the possibility of discussions with the local Community Centre to provide a facility for young people. In the short term, a suggestion is being considered that a short term lease on a property in Wheatley Hill might attract funding. Efforts are, therefore, being made to find a suitable property.
8. The possibility of summer sporting activities was raised by the District Council Officer and the young people were pleased to hear of the possibilities which might be available. They are to meet with the assistance of Investing in Children to come up with a list of desired activities which would then be considered by the Community Safety Partnership.

9. Another suggestion put forward was to provide assistance for the young people to form a young people's group to provide a focus for consultation and action. This is being pursued by Investing in Children.
10. Another issue raised was the possibility of young people taking over an allotment and this again was to be pursued.

Summary – Has it Made a Difference?

11. The aim of the Carrier Bag Culture Working Group was to look at issues from the point of view of young people to see whether with a co-ordinated approach some impact could be made on the problems of disaffected youth in this local area. It was recognised that there is no one problem nor one solution to this issue. The opportunity, however, for dialogue with young people does provide the prospect of a more sustainable approach to divert young people from anti-social activity and also to give them a more fulfilling lifestyle, but also, as a reminder that all young people are citizens with the right to be involved in decisions affecting their lives. The young people of Wheatley Hill have demonstrated the valuable contribution that young people can make to our communities.
12. The lessons to be learnt from this working group appear to be:-
 - a. By seeking to build up a dialogue with young people, there is the possibility of involving them and providing facilities which can then be much more sustainable in terms of having an impact on their lives. The outcome is often not one which is initially anticipated by the organisations involved.
 - b. The opportunity to bring relevant parties together with young people is not easy but perhaps can be delivered on a local community basis without the need for the intensive involvement of a Member Working Group.
 - c. The facility to have a clearer list of the initiatives which would attract funding would be a beneficial step forward so that young people are able to make an input into the realistic options which are available. The current position regarding initiatives and funding appears to be confusing.

Recommendation

13. Members of the Sub-Committee are asked to consider whether the lessons from this project should be recommended for consideration in other parts of the County.

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