
Young People's Working Group

22 July 2009

Report from the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

AN UPDATE ON CITY CENTRE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Summary

1. This report offers Members a further brief update on the search for sites and funds to establish enhanced facilities for young people close to the city centre. Mr Phil Bixby, the architect who has been working with us on the project, will be available at the meeting to answer Members' questions.

Background

2. The development of new city-centre facilities for young people continues to move forward in two distinct and complementary strands. However, as Members are aware, our plans to submit a bid for funding in the second round of the *myplace* programme have had to be curtailed as the Big Lottery has, without prior warning, changed the eligibility criteria to focus funds on those areas it deems most "deprived". This was a wholly unexpected and unwelcome development. We have registered strong protests with the BLF (along with other Councils, we understand) but to no avail. Nevertheless, the unanimous view of officers is that we should continue to work on the project in the hope that other funding streams may become available in the future.
3. The aim is to therefore to seek a range of ways of providing the facilities identified during the consultation with young people, and to identify alternative funding sources. The scale of our ambitions has however necessarily been reduced from those put originally forward for the RI site, and this (along with difficulties in progressing discussions with Network Rail given the current economic climate) has prompted the identification of an alternative focus for proposals. We regard the RI proposals as "on hold", and can revive them as necessary if the situation changes, and particularly if suitable developers come forward for York Northwest.
4. In the meantime, an alternative and potentially exciting possibility has emerged. Following discussions with York Museums Trust and other interested parties, initial sketch proposals have been drawn up for development of indoor and outdoor facilities around the ruins of St. Leonard's Hospital adjacent to the Museum Gardens. The Gardens already provide a well-used meeting place for young people, and proximity to the city centre and the new "Explore!" facilities in the adjacent library make this an ideal location, also well served by public transport. Design proposals for a contemporary adaptation and extension of the ruins have been discussed informally with city heritage staff and with English Heritage, with a broadly positive response. The area is currently a focus for drug use and antisocial behaviour and there is widespread support for more positive and managed activity. The proposed building would contain facilities for arts, dance, drama and digital media / DJ'ing, in addition to informal social use and access to support.

5. Our design proposals are currently being worked up in a little more detail to allow more formal discussions with council staff and others; the aim is to seek comment from the Conservation Panel in September. In comparison with the RI proposals the aims are more modest with a target cost of below £1 million. It must however be emphasised that as of today *we have no identified source for such funds*: what we are doing is to try to avoid the timescale issues we ran into with *myplace* by having a credible set of proposals already on the table for any future funding possibilities that may emerge. If the proposals begin to command consensus, then we can engage proactively in a search for funds, possibly by looking at the mainstream Lottery pot.
6. Meantime, proposals for a smaller and more immediate facility - under the working title *myplace NOW* - are progressing in parallel. It had been intended to submit a bid for YorkKash funding on the basis of an outline brief drawn up in consultation with local young people. In the event, a very similar bid was submitted by a group based out of St.Michael-le-Belfry, and rather than compete with this, a joint approach was agreed based around the *myplace NOW* design brief. The bid was successful, and the St.Michael-le-Belfry group are working with council staff to develop proposals and identify premises.
7. Council staff are also working to identify additional sources of funding which would be attracted by the £30,000 already secured in order to properly resource the project. The aim is to set up a city centre youth cafe and social facility, to be as accessible as possible and open as much of the time as possible. The core group already has experience of running a cafe for young people (FUSE) and is very enthusiastic. The intention is to have the cafe up and running within twelve months.
8. If possible, we will have some young people involved in the project available at the meeting to talk to Members.
9. In summary, the two, parallel proposals outlined in this briefing paper are entirely complementary. The youth cafe would be small in scale, would provide a basis for setting up structures and relationships between interested parties and would focus on informal social activity. The proposals for St. Leonard's Hospital would be broader in scope including more organised use for arts-based activities, which would tie in perfectly with the opportunities presented by the Explore! centre, the proposed cultural development of the Museum Gardens and the interest of the Museums Trust in culture and lifelong learning. It is hoped that the wide support for both proposals can continue to enable them to move towards realisation.

Consultation

10. Updates have been sent out to all those who have been involved in the original consultation process. The intervention of revision, exams and now the summer break has meant it has not been worthwhile organising meetings with the young people, but these will re-commence in September.

Options and Analysis

(This report is for information.)

Corporate Priorities

11. A successful project to enhance city centre youth facilities would contribute to meeting the following corporate priorities:
1. Improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city.
 2. Improving the health and lifestyles of the people that live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.
 3. Increasing people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects.
 4. Increasing the use of public and other environmentally-friendly modes of transport.
 5. Reducing the environmental impact of council activities and encouraging others to do the same.
 6. Reducing the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York.

Implications

12. Any relevant financial, HR, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, IT, property and planning issues will be identified at an appropriate point as the work progresses and brought before Members as necessary.

Risk Management

(There are no significant risks inherent in this report. A full risk analysis will be completed before any specific proposals are brought forward.)

Recommendations

13. That the Young People's Working Group note this update report and comment as they wish.

Reason: additional investment in youth facilities in the city is in line with our corporate priorities, and the views of residents and young people themselves.

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Report Approved

Yes

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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: None