



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Review of Facilities for Teenagers in North Hertfordshire

**Report of the
Facilities for Teenagers in North Hertfordshire
Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

June 2011

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Members of the Committee

Cllr Judi Billing (Chair)

Cllr Marilyn Kirkland

Cllr Paul Marment

Cllr Michael Weeks

FOREWORD



The provision of facilities for teenagers has become a rising priority for local authorities around the country. In Hertfordshire, there is a commitment to ensure that children and young people should enjoy a happy, healthy and safe childhood that prepares them well for adult life and enables them to reach their full potential.

In these times of constrained resources, we note the receding support for young people and those working with young people in their development. This may have deep reaching impacts on the aspirations, prospects and social mobility of young people in North Hertfordshire.

As an authority, we are looking at ways to help the next generation to become valuable contributors to the society in which they live.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a cross-party task and finish group to consider what provision is available for teenagers in North Hertfordshire. The following report sets out the findings and recommendations that we will present to the Council's Community Engagement and Rural Affairs Portfolio Holder.

I would like to thank the members of the task and finish group for their contribution to this useful piece of work.



The Council's District Wide Survey of 2008 noted the community's concern that there was a 'lack of activities for teenagers'. With this in mind, the Group undertook a different approach to understanding the nature of this concern. By engaging with the young people and those that work with them directly, we sought to better understand the requirements of young people. By better understanding their needs, we were able to arrive at better informed conclusions and recommendations at the end of this report.

With the support of the Community Development officers we have met a wide range of service providers operating at very different levels. I personally gained a greater insight into the quality and range of the facilities that are provided for teenagers in the district.

Given the challenges that some of the service providers face, I was impressed by the passion displayed by a number of them.

I am sorry that for a number of unavoidable reasons this piece of work has taken rather longer than we would have hoped

To conclude I have thoroughly enjoyed chairing this Scrutiny task and finish group. The cross-party group worked well together and with the officers that supported our work, although some of us felt a little old in some of the settings in which we found ourselves!

I would like to add my personal thanks to the group members and the officers for their contributions throughout

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task and Finish Group wish to thank the following officers for North Hertfordshire District Council:

- Reuben Ayavoo (Policy Officer)
- Margaret Bracey (Community Development Officer for Hitchin)
- Jim Brown (Policy and Scrutiny Manager)
- Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer for Royston)
- Steve Gibbs (Anti-social Behaviour Officer)
- Garry Gover (Community Development Officer for Southern Rural)
- Ashley Hawkins (Community Development Officer for Baldock)
- Stuart Izzard (Community Development Manager)
- Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City).
- Lynn Saville (Head of Community and Cultural Services)
- Brendan Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer)
- Helen Turner (Children and Young Persons Development Manager)

All who gave their time to meet with the Group and provide information, advice and ideas that helped the Group to achieve their aims and objectives.

The Task and Finish Group are grateful to the following partners who gave up their time to act as witnesses and provided a valuable contribution to the Group's investigations:

- Foley Adigun, Rap-Aid, Mrs Howard Hall
- Amanda Ashley, Sub Zero
- Jen Brown, Youth Worker (Church Parishes of Ashwell and Baldock)
- Mark Burke, Baldock Arena (Hitchin Town Youth Football Club)
- Graeme Endersby, Groundworks
- Claire Gormill, Youth Connexions, North Hertfordshire
- Richard Harman, Jackmans Improvement Group
- John Manitaro, Child UK
- Andy Manson, Head of Operations East, Youth Connexions
- Bernadette Rump, Pro-Action coordinator
- Sarah Serota, Youth Connexions, Baldock
- Judith Sutton, District Manager, Youth Connexions, North Hertfordshire
- Phil Townsend, BMX Park, Royston
- Andy and Viv Williams, House Drop in Centre, Royston
- Phil Yugoda, Bancroft Youth Centre

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 On the 1st September 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established the Facilities for Teenager's Task and Finish Group. The Group commenced their work in the first Quarter of 2010.
- 1.2 The Task and Finish Group set a scope for their activity. This includes the detail of the areas for review, suggested venues to visit and witnesses to interview; this can be found at **Appendix A** at the end of this report.
- 1.3 Part of the remit for the establishment of the group was in response to the outcomes of the Council's District Wide Survey in 2008 that found that one of the priority areas that the community were concerned with was the 'lack of activities for teenagers'. The Group therefore set themselves the aims of exploring and understanding the following:
- What facilities exists for teenagers in North Hertfordshire,
 - What exactly teenagers want in terms of facilities
 - Whether the existing facilities are fit for purpose
 - How organisations work together and whether any improvements can be made
- 1.4 To do so the Group agreed to tour some of the existing facilities, meet with some of the young people that use these facilities and those individuals that work with them. This was a slightly different approach to some previous task and finish groups, but felt the best route in order to engage on site with the users and providers or indeed, as proved the case during the review, with those who were often found outside organised events and activities regarding why they did not participate.
- 1.5 The intended outcomes of the investigation were to:
- Improve facilities for teenagers by identifying new premises and enhancing existing ones
 - Improve partnership working with youth agencies and the removal of duplication
 - Sustain, facilitate and encourage volunteer working
- 1.6 The report makes a number of recommendations based on the conclusions arrived at by the Group. These can be found at Page 26.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Context

2.1.1 In Hertfordshire, all local authorities and indeed the general population have an aspiration that each and every child and young person should enjoy a happy, healthy and safe childhood that prepares them well for adult life and enables them to reach their full potential. To ensure that this occurs, local authorities and the agencies they work with need to make sure that there are sufficient facilities, and variety of activities, available.

2.1.2 The work of the Task and Finish Group was to review and enhance the services and activities available to teenagers and the agencies (third sector and public sector) that work with them in town centres and rural areas in North Hertfordshire.

2.1.3 This review predates the commencement of the new coalition government and the impact of the constrained resources that the public sector is now experiencing. This also has a direct impact on the ability to significantly enhance the facilities and services for teenagers in North Hertfordshire, but it does present an opportunity also to review why teenagers may not wish, or be able, to use existing facilities or indeed know of their existence.

2.1.4 The Group based their investigation on the following questions:

- What are the existing facilities for teenagers and young people?
- What do young people want to do?
- What puts young people off using existing facilities?
- How does the existing work done by agencies who work with young people need to change?
- How can we encourage more volunteering and help to sustain existing volunteers?
- How can we share knowledge, skills and best practice effectively across the district and between groups?

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The Group identified a number of experts, interviewed some of them as witnesses and considered documentary evidence. The Group also considered background information for this review, looked at best practice and explored the evidence in order to reach its recommendations.

2.3 Background Information

2.3.1 To give some context to the need for facilities for teenagers it is useful to know the number of teenagers in the district, their educational attainment levels and their level of prosperity. This will determine the extent of facilities required. It is widely acknowledged that children growing up in poorer families emerge from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment. Such 'achievement gaps' are a major contributing factor to patterns of social mobility.

- 2.3.2 The most recent resident population estimate for the district is 124,700¹ (Jun 2009) up 6.5% from 2001 (see figure1) and is predicted to reach 137,600² (up 10.3% from 2001) by 2021. During the same period, 2001 – 21, the number of households is projected to rise by 31%. The variance between the percentage increase in population and increase in households is a result of changing family relationships and circumstances and people living longer. Most notably, a rise in the number of single person households is predicted to increase by 53% between 2008 and 2033 from 17,000 in 2008 to 26,000³.
- 2.3.3 At 20.2% of the overall population, the number of older people within our district is significantly above the national average of 16%. This includes around 23,000 people over the age of 65. It is predicted that by 2021, with increased longevity, the number of people of 65 years and older will increase by around 50%.
- 2.3.4 The number of residents aged 30-59 years has also grown more rapidly than other parts of the population in recent years, and this is thought to reflect those moving into the district for both the convenience of local work and the ability to commute to central London. There is a significant dip in the age profile of the district for 18 – 30 year olds; probably reflecting those who grow up here but leave the district for further

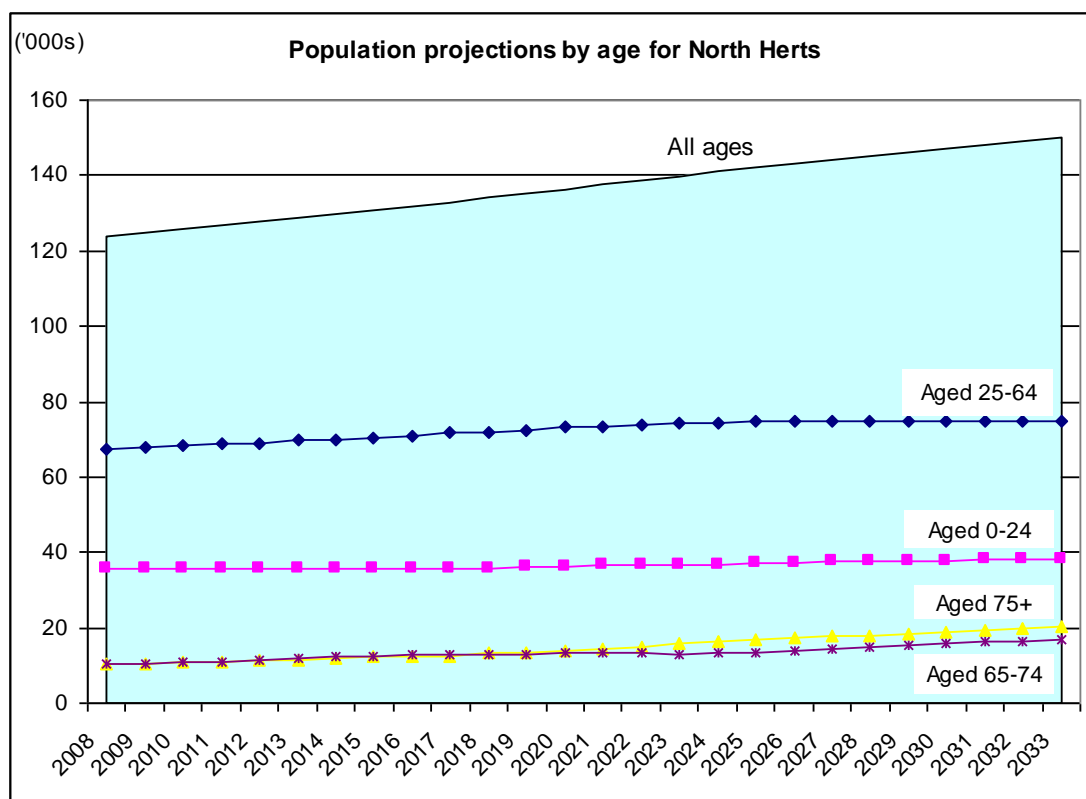


Figure 1 : Population projections by age for North Herts

¹ Resident Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

² Office for National Statistics; 2008-based Sub national Population Projections

³ Office for National Statistics; Household projections by household type and district 2008 & 2033

or higher education or first jobs. As mentioned above they are replaced by people in their thirties many of whom have started families. This age profile is principally caused by two factors:

- The limited opportunities for further education in the area, or at least the range of opportunities/subjects; and
- The high cost of housing, especially for young adults.

2.3.5 This 'dent' is predicted to get more pronounced and last longer, with people not returning until their late thirties or early forties. If people are unable to live here until after they have started families, it could significantly alter the make up of the local community.

2.3.6 Educational attainment in North Hertfordshire is quite high with 64.6% achieving five or more A*-C GCSEs in 2006. The range of this was from 40.4% in one part of Hitchin (Oughton Ward) to more than 85% in two other areas (85.4% Hitchin Priory and 85.1% Hitchin Highbury). The next highest ward was Arbury 83.3%, which includes Ashwell. (Community Profile and Needs Analysis 2004). Additionally, 11.4% of local children live in low-income households in North Hertfordshire (Audit Commission area profile for 2004).

2.4 **Wider Policy Context**

2.4.1 One of the expected outcomes of the Group was to improve facilities for teenagers by identifying new premises, activities and enhancing existing ones. Any recommendations must align with the Council's identified priorities contained within the Corporate Plan and, for the district, through its partnership document, the Sustainable Community Strategy.

2.5 **Links to North Hertfordshire District Council's Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy**

2.5.1 North Hertfordshire District Council published its first Corporate Plan in 2005. This high-level strategic document set out ambitions and aspirations for our district for the next 10 years until 2015.

2.5.2 The Council is committed to constantly reviewing its services and priorities to reflect local need. Through that process, three immediate priorities reflecting the needs of our communities were identified:

- ***town centres***
- ***green issues***
- ***sustainable development***

2.5.3 These priorities form the basis of North Hertfordshire District Council's corporate business planning process. The Council will concentrate its resources and activities on these areas. The issue of provision of services for young people is considered within the context of our town centres and sustainable development, as it is within our general support to the community via a number of council service areas, including Community Development, Community Safety, Sports Development, Parks and open spaces, etc

2.6 Sustainable Community Strategy

2.6.1 One of the ten themes within the current Sustainable Community Strategy is 'Improving the Life Chances of Children and Young People'. Within the strategy, North Hertfordshire District Council states a commitment to valuing young people in the local community. The Council are committed to working with the District Children's Trust Partnership to help achieve the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes for all children and young people:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

2.6.2 The review of facilities for teenagers will assist in achieving a number of the outcomes identified in this initiative.

3. FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY THE GROUP

3.1 The Group organised to review the existing facilities in Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Southern Rural areas with the aid of the relevant Community Development Officers.

3.1.1 The Group reviewed the following:

Hitchin

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| - Bancroft Gardens | Section 3.2.2 |
| - Windmill Hill | Section 3.2.5 |
| - Remix | Section 3.2.7 |
| - The Dell | Section 3.2.9 |
| - Sub Zero | Section 3.2.12 |
| - Mill FM | Section 3.2.18 |
| - St John's Community Centre | Section 3.2.23 |
| - Purwell Project | Section 3.2.25 |
| - Westmill Project | Section 3.2.27 |
| - Bancroft Youth Centre | Section 3.2.29 |

(The tour took place on the 1st July 2010)

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| - Urban Saints Youth Club | Section 3.6 |
| - Hitchin Christian Centre | Section 3.4 |

(The tour took place on the 9th July 2010)

Hitchin Youth Issues Group Section 3.9

(The tour took place on the 20th July 2010)

Southern Rural - Youth Provision by Pro-Action and Groundwork Section 3.7
(The tour took place on the 15th July 2010)

Letchworth –

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| - Friday Night Project | Section 3.10.2 |
| - Broadway Gardens – Youth Connexions | Section 3.10.7 |

- Grange Youth Club – Youth Connexions	Section 3.10.11
- Jackmans Youth Wing – Jackmans Improvement Group	Section 3.10.13
- Mrs Howard Hall Youth Wing - Rap-aid	Section 3.10.20
(The tour took place on the 20th August 2010)	
- Letchworth Youth Forum	Section 3.17
(This visit took place on the 21st January 2011)	
Royston	
- Swimming Pool & Cinema	Section 3.12.2
- Meridian Youth Club	Section 3.12.7
- Priory Gardens	Section 3.12.19
- The House Drop in Centre	Section 3.12.13
- BMX Park	Section 3.12.16
- Burns Road Boxing Club	Section 3.12.18
- Skate Park	Section 3.12.19
(The tour took place on the 7th September 2010)	
Baldock	
- Knights Templar Sports Centre	Section 3.14
- Baldock Arena	Section 3.14.6
- Bowls/Cricket Club	Section 3.14.10
- Youth Club, Baldock Community Centre	Section 3.14.12
(The tour took place on the 27th September 2010)	

The following outlines the Group's findings:

3.2 Tour of Hitchin and meeting at Bancroft Youth Centre – Thursday 1st July 2010

3.2.1 Members of the task and finish group, along with the Scrutiny Officer, Community Development Officer for Hitchin and Community Development Manager undertook a tour of Hitchin to assess some of the facilities and activities for young people.

3.2.2 The tour started with a walk around **Bancroft Gardens**. Bancroft Hall is owned by NHDC and is in need of refurbishment, albeit outline plans for this and redevelopment of the surrounding gardens themselves are already scheduled within the Council's work programme and will be subject to extensive consultation in due course. At the time of the visit, there were very few young people in the gardens.

3.2.3 The free tennis courts that are available to the public were in light use at the time of the tour, whereas the private tennis club had all the courts in use and coaching was taking place. Hitchin Tennis Club, the private facility, plans to rebuild its clubhouse and commit a proportion of the tennis courts for open public use on certain days. There was discussion as to whether the facilities could be shared. There are diversionary activities in the area on Friday nights. A consultation is about to begin led by Groundwork about the refurbishment of the Gardens. **(Conclusion Two)**.

- 3.2.4 The Group then visited the **Windmill Hill**. The Hill was previously populated by large numbers of young people Friday and weekend nights; the Council and its partners received many complaints of antisocial behaviour and under age drinking. The enforcement of a dispersal order, along with CCTV installation has reduced the activity in this area. There were no young people present at the time of the visit. **(Conclusion Two)**.
- 3.2.5 The Group then visited **Remix**. This is a club in Hermitage Road that had been very popular with young people but which had now closed. The Group learnt that despite its popularity and NHDC's attempts to assist in keeping the facility open, the closure was unavoidable. **(Conclusion Two)**.
- 3.2.6 The Group then visited the **Dell**. This is an open space with wooded areas, adjacent to the River Hiz used mainly by bikers (due to the undulating ground and 'bowl') and by fire jugglers and for informal use. Plans to locate high rope activities (with supervision and entry cost) had been proposed in the past by a commercial organisation but had not progressed. This space remains underused at present. (Conclusion Two).
- 3.2.7 The Group then moved onto the **Market Area**. The Market Area is an ideal space for ideal space for young people to congregate. This was an area well used by young people but none were evident at the visit. **(Conclusion Two)**.
- 3.2.8 The Group then visited **Sub Zero** on far corner of Churchgate, adjoining the Market; this is in premises owned by the district council, adapted for its present use. It is a music-based venue for young people under 18. Amanda Ashley runs Sub Zero and is part of SoundBase Studios Trust, a registered charity. SoundBase has other premises in Bancroft. It was set up to offer innovative music and art opportunities to disaffected young people – including young offenders, school exclusives, those at risk of offending and exclusion, and those with learning disabilities. It is in use for daytime activities for school children, including during lunch breaks as well as for evening events.
- 3.2.9 Its facilities include three recording studios, a live drum room, and the latest industry standard software, along with specially built music technology workstations and decks. The Apple Mac/PC Multimedia Suite has facilities for video production, web design, digital photography and graphic design.
- 3.2.10 Courses are available for 16-19 year olds NEETS (those not in education, employment or training who are required to attend 2- 3 days a week).
- 3.2.11 Learners have individual learning plans tailored to their own needs, and are allocated a key worker for additional support. Courses cover:
- Music Performance / Technology - DJ skills, sound engineering, production and performance;
 - Graphic Design - Posters, Flyers, Packaging, Branding and marketing are all covered.
 - Video Production - Film Making, Documentaries, Short Films, Scripting and storyboarding;
 - Drug Awareness (compulsory subject); and
 - Key Skill courses (compulsory subject).

- 3.2.12 Premises and equipment within Sound Base's studios are also available for organisations who may wish to use/hire them.
- 3.2.13 The Group heard from Amanda Ashley that **Mill FM** had been based at its studios. Mill FM is a youth and community radio station that was developed by young people of Westmill with the help of a Youth Opportunities Fund bid and broadcasted throughout the summer of 2009. The Group were informed that, unfortunately, the funding would cease in a few weeks. NHDC, SoundBase, CAYPOW (Children and Young People of Westmill) and Groundwork had all been involved in making the project a success. Young people were involved in workshops on technical skills, use of basic equipment and monitoring live performances in preparation for running live band nights and producing radio jingles.
- 3.2.14 An important outcome of the project was bridging the gap between young people and the rest of the community. Online, around 100 people a day tuned into Mill Fm online.
Over 200 text messages were received over the two weeks on air and about 100 young people were involved in Mill FM over the two weeks of live broadcasting.
- 3.2.15 The Group then attended the **Urban Saints Youth Club**. This youth club held at the Hitchin Christian Centre on Friday nights and regularly attracts up to 100 young people. It is one initiative of a range of children and young people based programmes facilitated by the Centre. This was the subject of a separate visit.
- 3.2.16 The **St John's Community Centre** is a Friday night youth club run by the Community Centre Management Committee and supported by NHDC Children's Services Team.
- 3.2.17 The **Purwell Project** is run by Groundwork Hertfordshire Youth Project with support from other partnership agencies and meets on Thursday.
- 3.2.18 The **Westmill Project** hosts a number of organisations. CAYPOW meet on Mondays and occasional Tuesdays at the Coffee Mill, John Barkers Place. There is also a Thursday meeting for a group of volunteers from Hitchin Christian Centre who run a popular youth evening. The Coffee Mill is an old shop previously used as a drop in centre, and community fruit/vegetable enterprise, and as such is not suitable for youth work. However, it is the only premises available now. There are plans for a new Community Centre with proposed youth facilities on John Barker Place in the future
- 3.2.19 Youth Connexions main hub facility for North Herts is housed in a former courthouse, the **Bancroft Youth Centre**, managed by Phil Yugoda. At the time of the visit, the Youth centre was deserted. This was due, in part, to the school proms taking place that evening.
- 3.2.20 The centre provides facilities for young people including pool, table tennis, computer access, music, art. The advisers see their role as social educators and where necessary, to challenge the behaviour of young people. The centre also provides help with employment and benefits. It can issue young people with C cards "condom cards". They have just started Chlamydia screening with pregnancy testing to follow shortly. All sexual matters are treated confidentially. **(Conclusion One)**.

- 3.2.21 The club tried opening Monday nights for Asian children but this was unsuccessful so has moved to a more traditional programme on Tuesday nights.
- 3.2.22 On Wednesday they run Snappy Gs, a programme for young people with learning difficulties which has about 25-30 regulars brought in. (See Slide on Page 37). Thursday night is a traditional youth club and there are plans to open on Friday nights too. Plans include a Herts Young Homeless Group once a month on a Thursday. The club has organised an outdoor activities weekend at Mersea Island and put on a performance of Grease over two nights. The premises are sub-let to Phase, a Christian charity run by Kieran Murphy. **(Conclusion One)**.
- 3.2.23 The Group heard little joint working occurred with SoundBase now. Members heard from Louis, a volunteer worker who had worked in the media and who had some ideas for improving the youth centre. These included:
- Engaging young people with multi media which they did not have access to, graphic design, music, i-movies, DVDs and short films, all based around Apple-Mac;
 - Providing radio skills, using the Mill FM project;
 - Improving the fabric of the premises; and
 - Re-branding it as Studio 29.
- 3.2.24 There was similar equipment already in place at Sub Zero but there were problems accessing it.
- 3.3 **Post visit meeting**
- 3.3.1 The Group noted the small turnout in both Sub Zero and Bancroft Youth Centre.
- 3.3.2 The Group considered there was a good deal of provision in Hitchin but considered that more could be done to enhance cooperation between providers in terms of sharing premises and other resources. The Group queried whether the Bancroft Youth Club's facilities could be shared with Urban Saints who are looking for premises. The Group heard there was a Hitchin Youth Issues Group, which was a forum to address issues of coordination and cooperation. As a first step, the Chair and the Scrutiny Officer would undertake to its next meeting on 20th July 2010. **(Recommendation One)**.
- 3.3.3 The Group discussed whether there was enough money in the Hitchin Area Committee budget to fund the Mill FM Community Radio programme for a longer period*. Members were impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers they had met and the Scrutiny Officer undertook to speak to Louis about volunteering. **(Recommendation One)**.
- 3.4 **Visit to Hitchin Christian Centre – Friday 9th July 2010**
- 3.4.1 The Community Development Office for Hitchin and Scrutiny Officer accompanied **Cllr Judi Billing** to **Hitchin Christian Centre** where **Urban Saints** run a youth club on from 7pm – 9pm Friday nights for 11-18 year olds.

- 3.4.2 A dozen or so volunteers who undergo comprehensive training in order to help them work effectively and achieve a good standard of youth work practice led the activities. A variety of projects are available to young people including the weekly youth groups, special events, holidays, community projects and training programmes. Several of the attendees had just returned from Mexico where they had spent 10 days working on a Community building project, part funded by a contribution from NHDC through Hitchin Area Committee. **(Conclusion Five)**.
- 3.4.3 Selected young people with leadership potential are mentored and encouraged to take leadership positions within the group.
- 3.4.4 Their Christianity underpins the work of Urban Saints and this was evident during the first part of Friday night's programme that was split into two one-hour session:
- An interactive session with the attendees; and
 - A second period in which students use the facilities as they choose.
- 3.4.5 The interactive session took the form of a mixture of icebreakers, games, videos and a discussion about the meaning of character drawn against a background of a reading from the New Testament. A small minority did not engage with the Christian message.
- 3.4.6 The second session allowed the students the freedom to use the facilities and socially interact as they chose. There were various computer games available as well as internet access and other facilities available. Fifty-eight young people were present the evening on the evening of the visit. The club organisers mentioned that this was a much lower turnout than usual. It was clearly a very popular club. The Group were told of one father who drove from Luton because his daughter liked the Youth Club so much.
- 3.4.7 There was no specific marketing of the club. Most people attended through word of mouth; that seems to be one of the main ways to reach young people.
- 3.4.8 The organisers were brimming with energy, enthusiasm and imagination and it was clear how well they connected with the young people in attendance. The club and the programme were very well organised.
- 3.4.9 The Urban Saints Youth Club was considered an excellent facility. It was noted that other faith groups or some non-Christians might not feel comfortable in a club with such a strongly focused Christian agenda. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two)**.

* continuation funding was agreed by Hitchin Area Committee at their meeting on 13th July.

3.5 **Pro Action – The Youth Provision in Rural Areas**

3.5.1 The Pro-Action District Co-ordinator, Bernadette Rump, explained that Pro-Action is a membership-based support organisation funded by Youth Connexions. It aimed at supporting those seeking to developing young people’s participation and development through volunteering and activities. It operates as an independent charitable organisation using a network of district co-ordinators which enabling voluntary organisations to flourish.

3.5.2 The benefits of membership for organisation are:

- Free CRB checks for volunteers
- Policy / Procedure guidance & training
- Funding advice and support
- Event and programme support
- Quality Standards accreditation
- Representation locally and regionally

Training for volunteers includes

- Safeguarding – Introduction and Designated
- Health and Safety
- Food Hygiene
- Behaviour Management
- First Aid
- Drug Awareness
- Small cost or FREE for members

3.5.3 The services that are provided direct to young people includes a Young Peoples Voluntary Sector Forum and training and volunteering opportunities.

3.5.4 Pro-Action’s sports events programme includes county-wide competitive events; a Gillette Cup football squad; boxing; 5-a-side football; table tennis; pool and snooker competitions; and fishing. Alternative events include a Super teams event; midnight ice skating; Highland Games; and BOOM! (A multimedia project)

3.5.5 Pro-Action also provides young peoples’ accreditation:

- Keystone Awards (OCN accredited)
- Youth Achievement Awards (ASDAN accredited)

3.5.6 These awards are an activity-based approach to peer education. The award is introduced with the young people in the setting, with the addition of completing a portfolio and participating for 60 hours, and Pro-Action moderator would verify the portfolios for accreditation.

3.5.7 Ongoing Projects included *RURBAN*, multi-sport activities delivered direct to members over an 8 week period in partnership with Herts Sports Partnership and CHILD UK, offering 2 hour sessions with a qualified coach.

3.5.8 The District Co-ordinator stated that volunteers need training and modelling. Pro-Action would support the volunteers in a new club, perhaps with Groundworks running it for a year or two, before stepping back and allowing the volunteers to run the club themselves. A good model for this is YMCA in Great Ashby. A number of groups are interested in following this model.

(Conclusion One).

3.6 **Youth Provision – Groundworks**

- 3.6.1 Graeme Endersby, the Youth Works Manager for Groundwork, explained that the post of Youth Manager at Westmill had been created by an initiative funded by Hitchin Area Committee, North Herts Homes and the Big Lottery. The original proposal anticipated funding for two years, but the project had continued beyond that, with some £175,000 being raised mostly through the Youth Opportunities Fund. **(Conclusion One)**.
- 3.6.2 Work was done in partnership with the Children and Young People of Westmill (CAYPOW) Group and with the Extended Schools Coordinators, Play, North Herts Homes and NHDC. There is a regular youth night in the Coffee Mill youth centre. Seventy percent of the attendees are from an Afro-Caribbean background.
- 3.6.3 Westmill was a very good partnership with a high profile, and a strong infrastructure. The key issue was sustainability and funding, with plans to redevelop the project current on hold pending an application for section 106 monies.
- 3.6.4 Much of the Youth Works Manager's time is spent trying to secure money for new and existing projects and he made a plea to simplify grant applications procedures.

3.7 **Community Development work in the Southern Rural Area**

- 3.7.1 Garry Gover, the Community Development Officer (CDO) for Southern Rural areas explained that he had run a volunteer youth group for many years. As CDO, he had set up youth forums in Wymondley, Gravely, St Ippolyts and Knebworth. He had tried unsuccessfully to set up a youth centre using a school premises in Gravely and had to use premises in Great Ashby instead with a minibus available, but the young people of Gravely wanted to use a local facility.
- 3.7.2 Facilities had also been established in:
- Wymondley – a facility, initially quite small, had benefited from funding from the Parish Challenge Fund to enable the building of a multi-use games area (MUGA);
 - Kimpton – a successful centre which included a grow and cook organic food programme;
 - St Ippolyts – a voluntarily resourced youth centre was established in 2005 with the help of a £1,500 grant from Southern Rural Area Committee and the free use of the facility one night a week;
 - Codicote - the club was sited in the Peace Memorial Hall.
- 3.7.3 £12,000 had also been committed by Southern Rural Area Committee to fund outreach youth workers in partnership with Youth Connexions.

3.8 **Post visit meeting**

- 3.8.1 The Group considered that partnership working and consistency of funding was the key to the success of any enterprise; and that one party needs to take the lead in the partnership, a role that usually fell to Youth Connexions as the main provider. **(Conclusion One and Recommendation One).**
- 3.8.2 The Group regretted the lack of consultation of local providers by Youth Connexions when preparing the Young People's Plan.
- 3.8.3 It was recognised that Youth Connexions might have more constraints to operate within than independent providers might. The meeting heard that Youth Connexions had a strategy of providing a large facility in every major town, but many youths did not wish to travel outside their communities. It was difficult to influence and change the behaviour of a large organisation whose decision-making was slow. However, it was not possible to stand still against a backdrop of a changing situation so providers worked with those partners who were available.
- 3.8.4 The Group noted a trend towards Youth Connexions withdrawing support from rural areas and queried whether its strategy of concentrating its efforts - and its funding - in the four main towns was effective. The meeting heard there were similar concerns about the concentration of funding in the Bowes Lyon Centre in Stevenage that meant that there was insufficient provision for other activities in other places. **(Recommendation One).**
- 3.8.5 The Church was doing valuable and successful work with young people. Soul Survivor ran an event in Bath that attracted 11,000 young people. Attendees considered that strong congregations led to many children attending who in turn brought their friends. Only statutory providers provided funding for the North Hertfordshire's Young People's Plan. **(Conclusions Three and Five and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.8.6 The Youth Manager stated that youth work centred on a building was still valid, however providers needed to be creative with the use of IT as this was of huge interest to young people. The quality of facilities was vital, as was accessibility. Sharing of facilities and other resources is possible, but this needs to be a directed piece of work and does not occur spontaneously.

3.9 **Visit to Hitchin Youth Issues Group – 20th July 2010**

- 3.9.1 **Cllr Judi Billing**, accompanied by the Scrutiny Officer and Community Development Officer for Hitchin attended a meeting of the **Hitchin Youth Issues Group**.
- 3.9.2 This is an informal group attended by providers and agencies such as Groundworks, SoundBase, Extended Schools Co-ordinators, NHDC, Churches, the Police and others including Youth Connexions. Providers use this group to exchange information, share ideas and work out solutions to practical problems.
- 3.9.3 The Group attended this forum to see if it could assist in resolving the apparent co-ordination issues that had been uncovered.

- 3.9.4 The Forum meeting generated a number of good ideas, including:
- Communicating more effectively with young people by using Facebook, mobile phones and school plasmas;
 - Using Keith Hoskins (Hitchin Town Centre Manager) to signpost volunteering opportunities;
 - Setting up a volunteering agency to coordinate volunteering, training of volunteers etc.
- 3.9.5 There were also some concerns about the effectiveness and ways of operating of certain providers, e.g., Letchworth Job Centre, Youth Connexions, and North Herts College. **(Conclusion One and Recommendation One).**
- 3.9.6 The Group asked how the Forum represented those concerns to Youth Connexions and others. There did not appear to be an established route to do so. The forum suggested that they could invite funding providers to future meetings or pass those concerns up to the District Children's Trust Partnership.
- 3.10 **Tour of Letchworth Youth Facilities - Friday 20th August 2010**
- 3.10.1 The Community Development Officer for Letchworth and Community Development Manager accompanied **Cllr Marilyn Kirkland** and **Cllr Michael Weeks** as they toured the Teenagers facilities in Letchworth.
- 3.10.2 The Group visited the **Friday Night Project**. John Manitaro runs the project. He is the Child UK lead on the project and works in partnership with the Hertfordshire Constabulary, North Herts Homes, NHDC and Youth Connexions.
- 3.10.3 The project provides diversionary activities across the district on a Friday evening. Youth workers provide outreach and engagement with groups of young people who congregate in several areas around North Hertfordshire, such as Windmill Hill in Hitchin and Norton Common in Letchworth.
- 3.10.4 With the assistance of the Police, the Youth workers can quickly mobilise to where large number of young people are congregating. The Youth workers can arrive at the area and provide and deliver various activities, such as football, games, and craft activities. These act as positive activities to divert the young people from causing anti-social behaviour and consume excessive amounts of alcohol or illegal substances. Health advice is also provided and Young people are sign posted to other formalised activities.
- 3.10.5 Child UK were re-starting the Friday night project in Letchworth at the Creamery Site, Multi Use Games Area on the Jackmans estate in October 2010.
- 3.10.6 The Group then visited the **Broadway Gardens**. As part of Youthoria, the Summer Programme of Activities for Young People, five Youth Connexions staff were running outdoor activities from 6pm to 8pm.

- 3.10.7 Around 20 young people attended during the visit. The Young People were participating in various activities including: Sumo Wrestling in costume suits and games with a parachute. The group was informed that ranges of outdoor activities have been taking place around Letchworth and other places throughout the District. Activities took place in each week of the School Holiday period; based in various parks and open space locations. **(Conclusion One and Recommendation One).**
- 3.10.8 The times and venues had been publicised through the Youthoria programme, Youth Connexions website – ‘Channel Mogo’ and by word of mouth. To ensure willing participation by the young people, the youth workers provided a wide range of games and resources available to them. The young people chose which activities that they wanted to take part in. The youth workers did not dictate what activities were undertaken. **(Recommendation One).**
- 3.10.9 The Group then went on to visit the **Grange Youth Club**. Claire Gormill runs this Youth club. Claire started working voluntarily to manage the Club, but is now employed by Youth Connexions one evening per week.
- 3.10.10 The facility is well resourced and furnished; however, the voluntary management committee are currently looking for funding to improve access for people with disabilities. The Youth Club is open on Tuesday’s 7pm to 9.00pm and Friday’s 6.30pm to 9.00pm.
- 3.10.11 At the time of the visit, only two young people were using the facility. The evening club had reopened recently after a short break during the summer holiday period, so a small attendance was not unusual. A pool tournament was planned to take place later and this would increase the attendance at the club. The average attendance at the club was thirty young people but often exceeded that number on a Tuesday. During the break period, Claire had already started to organise several trips and outings for the benefit of the Youth club. **(Conclusion Two).**
- 3.10.12 The group went on to meet with Richard Harmon at the **Jackmans Youth Wing**. Richard is the Chair of the **Jackmans Improvement Group (JIG)**. He escorted the Group into the former Jackmans library building that is now being used as a Youth facility.
- 3.10.13 The Youth facility is run by Youth Connexions that had been closed for the summer months. It normally opens on Friday evenings from 6.30 until 9.00pm
- 3.10.14 As part of the Jackmans precinct regeneration, the building was due to be re-developed. The JIG held off doing any improvement work to the internal décor since first taking over the building from NHDC as a library.
- 3.10.15 The redevelopment for the area has now been postponed for the near future. It is therefore become a viable proposition to redecorate the interior of the building to improve the facility. External funding would be required to assist with this work. JIG and NHDC are in the process of drafting a lease agreement for the facility. It must be noted that funding sources will not be encourage to provide funds for capital works on the building unless the JIG have at least a five / ten year guarantee that they will have use of the building. **(Recommendation Three).**

- 3.10.16 In addition to the interior renovations, more robust security measures would be needed for the exterior of the building. This will ensure that adequate security will be in place for any new equipment that may be purchased for the Youth Club.
- 3.10.17 Up to forty young people attend the club on Friday. Youth Connexions are unable to open the Club up at other times, as they do not have the necessary staff resources to do so. **(Recommendation One)**.
- 3.10.18 The Group then visited **Rap-Aid at Mrs Howard Hall Youth Wing**. This is a recently opened facility. The Group spoke to Foley Adigun who manages the youth facility.
- 3.10.19 The resources available to the young people were recording music facilities, an IT suite, comfortable sofas and bean bags, TV and computer games. The Group considered these facilities excellent. The upstairs hall when available can be used for other games such as table tennis and table football.
- 3.10.20 Foley informed the group that he currently subsidises the facility from his own finances. External funding would be needed to support this facility in the future. It has also become evident since the time of this review that security at Mrs Howard Hall needs to be upgraded as the building has been broken into on several occasions with the loss of laptops and other high cost, portable equipment.

3.11 **Post Visit Summary**

- 3.11.1 The excellence demonstrated at the facility at the Grange Youth Club could be solely attributed to the enthusiasm and organisation of its leader Claire Gormill. The facility at the Jackmans estate was in great need of refurbishment. The Youth Wing at Mrs Howard Hall was currently under utilised. It was felt that this under use was endemic of other facilities in North Hertfordshire.

3.12 **Tour of Royston – Tuesday 7th September 2010**

- 3.12.1 The Community Development Officer for Royston and Scrutiny Officer accompanied **Cllr Marilyn Kirkland** and **Cllr Michael Weeks** as they toured the Teenagers facilities in Royston.
- 3.12.2 The Group drove past North Herts Homes housing development in Newmarket Road. Members were informed that this had been the **former site of the swimming pool (The Green Plunge) and adjoining cinema**, the latter in 2006. The swimming pool had been relocated to a more distant location as part of the new Leisure Centre complex in Woodcock Road. This is approximately a mile away; however, there is not a direct route to the pool.
- 3.12.3 This had had the unexpected effect of depriving youngsters of a place to hang out as well as swim, removing an important centre for socialising. The CDO reported he had heard unprompted comments from young people of how they use to 'meet down the Green Plunge'. **(Conclusion Two)**.

- 3.12.4 The absence of a cinema has become a large issue in Royston. There are plans to establish a community cinema within the town hall in Royston. This emulates the approach adopted by Saffron Walden. **(Recommendation Three).**
- 3.12.5 The aims of the Saffron Walden community cinema are the provision of a cinema and education. In addition to mainstream films, the cinema also offers live screenings of plays and ballet performances. There are also opportunities for local clubs and societies, and for individuals, to use the cinema for special events and screenings.
- 3.12.6 Funding is being sought through the Royston Business Improvement District (BID) group. Royston Town Council is leading in costing preparation.
- 3.12.7 The Group then visited the Youth Connexions run the **Meridian Centre Youth Club**. The Meridian school rents a building to Youth Connexions for the Club and is located within the grounds of the Meridian School. The Club was shut on the night of the visit so the Group were unable to assess the facilities. The building is situated at the very edge of the town and would prove difficult to access for those outside of the school's catchment area. **(Recommendation One).**
- 3.12.8 The Group queried whether the situating of the Youth Club within school ground would be off putting to young people. It was reported that Youth Connexions had closed a better-located premise at Burns Road in order to keep the Meridian School facilities opened. The Meridian facilities are purpose built.
- 3.12.9 The Group then visited the **Priory Memorial Gardens**. This is a well-maintained area that contains war memorials, areas of remembrance, a fenced play area for toddlers and juniors and a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). At the time of the visit, there were very few young people in the gardens.
- 3.12.10 It was reported that formerly, there had been damage to structures in the gardens, to seasonal bedding and that the police had intervened when intoxicated young people were being rowdy. This caused the police to be continually moving on the young people at the behest of concerned residents, and had displaced the problem to other locations.
- 3.12.11 However, the new police sergeant had instituted a new policy of laissez-faire (leaving them alone). The Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) had built up good relationships with the young people, which enabled them to tackle problems faster and more effectively.
- 3.12.12 It was also reported that acts of graffiti and vandalism had occurred around the entrance, opposite the library. This had been rectified by a couple of simple, low cost measures like fitting side gates to the park entrance and the persuading the owner of the local premises to install lighting. It was noted on inspection that locks were inoperable.
- 3.12.13 The Group then visited the **House Drop in Centre** which opens on Tuesday and Saturday evenings from 7-10pm, Sundays from 12 – 4pm and a couple of days during the school holidays. In spite of the inclement weather, the Group noted that there were a number of young people waiting to enter the centre.

- 3.12.14 The centre is a registered charity that began as a temporary café for the Millennium. It moved to its current premises after its lease expired and in response to demand from its users. The centre has now been established for eight and a half years at its current site. Two volunteers run it. Andy and Viv Williams have created a welcoming environment. They have not instituted too many rules and consequently, young people are able to take time out and relax at the centre. Both volunteers have established good relationships with the young people over a period of years. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.12.15 Their biggest challenge is funding. The centre costs £20,000 (running costs of rent and other accommodation and licensing expenses of a year to run). Andy explained that while funds are available for projects, it is very difficult to get funding for running costs. **(Recommendation Three).**
- 3.12.16 The **BMX Park at Burns Road** is an excellent family oriented facility. It is based on the site of a former rubbish tip. Although membership fees were low, the Royston BMX club had been in existence for nearly twenty-five years ago. It is a nationally recognised club. The Club's members take part in race meetings at Club level, at Regional level and at National or even International level. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.12.17 This was the first facility where both parents and young people attended together. It was noted that the success of the club stemmed from the enthusiastic leader, Phil Townsend. The track is on land owned by North Hertfordshire District Council. The Club is in discussion with the Council to ascertain whether planning permission is required to upgrade its facilities. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.12.18 The **Burns Road Boxing Club** is based at Burns Road Coombes Community Centre. It is a long established club and attendance was good. On the evening of the visit, the Club was well attended in spite of an England National football being televised. There were a number of coaches on site and the club which appeared friendly and successful. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.12.19 The Group did not have time to visit the **skate park in Newmarket Road**: this had been moved from the Burns Road site and positioned as far as possible from housing. Residents had made complaints due to the noise generated by the Park so it was moved away from the housing stock. It was, however, in regular use and there had been calls for its expansion.

3.13 Post visit meeting

- 3.13.1 This one reinforced a number of themes identified through earlier visits:
- Youth Connexions were not highly thought of, and in this case members thought their youth centre was poorly located;
 - Many of the clubs without government funding were more successful than those receiving funding, due mostly to the selflessness, dedication and enthusiasm of the club leaders;
 - Allied to this, volunteers need more support;
 - Small, thoughtful expenditure – like park gates, lighting – can have a big effect;
 - Problems with duplication and failure to share equipment and premises were evident;
 - A sensible approach by the police allied to building good relationships with the police has curtailed so-called “anti-social” behaviour in Priory Gardens and the surrounding areas.

3.14 Tour of Baldock – 27th September 2011

- 3.14.1 The Sports Centre is attached to a secondary school in Baldock. The **Knights Templar Sports Centre** is a modern dual use facility and conveniently situated in Baldock with ample car parking. The modern air-conditioned underwent a full refurbishment in September 2006.
- 3.14.2 The Sports Hall offers a variety of sports including; 5-a-side Football, Basketball, Badminton, Indoor Cricket Nets, Netball, Trampolining, and Gymnastics/pole fitness. The trampolining, badminton and gymnastics have specific clubs for young people.
- 3.14.3 The centre has a new all Weather Pitch that is available for hire for a wide range of outdoor sports. There is also a number of outdoor grass football and three outdoor tennis courts/netball courts.
- 3.14.4 Trampolining sessions run on Monday's during term time. Knights Gymnastics Club sessions run on a Tuesday and Wednesday during term time. Knights Badminton Club sessions run for ages from 5-16 years on Saturday afternoons.
- 3.14.5 The Group noted that there were a large number of people in attendance. This reflected the view that formally structured activities were well attended. The contact at the Sports Centre is Richard Gunney, but was unavailable for the visit. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**
- 3.14.6 The Group met Mark Burke, the Manager at the **Friday Night Project**, at **The Baldock Arena** He appeared to be very enthusiastic and knowledgeable in the available activities for young people. The Group noted that the facility was very well attended by young people on the evening of the visit. **(Conclusion Three and Recommendation Two).**

- 3.14.7 The following activities are available: 5-a-side, 7-a-side and 11-a-side on the artificial pitch, a 3G surface that provides ideal all-weather playing conditions. It is available seven days a week. There is also a Café & Bar available for parents who attend with their children.
- 3.14.8 Also established at the Arena is the Hitchin Town Youth Football Club. This is part of the Hitchin Town Football Club community. This is affiliated to the Hertfordshire FA and has teams competing in the Royston Crow League, Mid Herts League and AVC Chiltern Youth League.
- 3.14.9 The Football Association are committed to supporting grassroots clubs to raise the standards of football provision. The commitment to the facility by the Hitchin Town Youth is evident is the service they currently provide for the young people at Baldock.
- 3.14.10 **The Baldock Bowls and Cricket Town Club is based at Avenue Park.** The Baldock Crusaders Netball Club also train at this facility. There is also a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) available for young people. On the evening of the visit, there were neither young people in evidence nor any activities taking place.
- 3.14.11 The Group noted that the high fencing around the facility could be seen as forbidding and off-putting to young people. On the night of the visit, neither senior nor youth teams were training to talk to regarding the facility.
- 3.14.12 Youth Connexions runs a **Youth Club in the Youth Wing of the Baldock Community Centre.** Sarah Serota is the Youth Worker here. Club runs Monday and Thursday – 7-9:45pm. Youth club only recommenced on 6th September 2010. Approximately 30 young people attend. She is also responsible for running new Baldock Youth Council.
- 3.14.13 The Group were surprised at the physical condition of the Youth Wing. It was in need of renovation, refurbishment and up to date equipment. The Group also noted that the activities that were provided for the young people were out dated. When talking to the youth workers in attendance, the Group were given the impression that the skills of the workers were not in line with current Youth provision guidance. **(Conclusion Four and Recommendation One).**
- 3.14.14 One of the Group noted that his children used to attend an afternoon group, but no longer attended. Only 8-10 young people attended on the night of the visit. The facilities available to the young people are a pool table, table tennis, tv and art activities. One of the activities being undertaken that night was designing a new logo for the Youth Wing.
- 3.16 **Youth Connexions**
- 3.16.1 The Group considered evidence from a number of external organisations including Youth Connexions and other Youth organisations in rural areas The Youth Connexions team presented an overview of the work they are doing in North Hertfordshire. Judith Sutton is the District Manager of Youth Connexions and gave the presentation. A copy of the presentation is attached to this report as **Appendix B.**

- 3.16.2 The presentation stated the target audience of her work is 13 to 19 year olds (and up to 25 years for young people with additional needs). This work specifically involves:
- Information, advice and guidance
 - Targeted support
 - Youth work – Positive activities for young people
- 3.16.3 Youth Connexions noted that there is an increase in the number of NEETS (Not in Education, Employment and Training) within the 16-18 age range. A large number are experiencing significant issues and barriers, a lack of employment opportunities and appropriate level training opportunities. Another identified issue is that of the effective delivery of sexual health services across the district to this demographic group.
- 3.16.4 The organisation reports that young people say they want:
- activities in the evenings and at weekends that are low cost
 - more music events at weekends
 - more sporting activities
 - to be able to talk about their issues and problems
 - somewhere to go that is safe
 - better transport
- 3.16.5 Moreover, that some of their concerns are:
- drugs
 - alcohol
 - smoking
 - education and anti-bullying
 - sexual health
 - body image
 - employment
 - access to low cost activities,
- 3.16.6 Some of the Group expressed concern over the physical condition and atmosphere at the Youth Club at Baldock. The District Manager stated that since the group had visited the Club, a full time member of staff had been appointed and that conditions had positively changed.
- 3.16.7 Another query arose over the low numbers of teenagers attending the Youth Club. There was no real explanation other than general circumstances and young peoples' wish to stay at home with the ever-increasing choice of electronic computer games and personal entertainment options.
- 3.16.8 The Group asked how the current financial restraints would affect the service offered. Youth Connexions stated that the organisation was currently undergoing a review but the emphasis was to protect frontline services.
- 3.16.9 Jen Brown, a Youth Worker provided an overview of her work with young people in Ashwell and Baldock parishes. Since entering her role, she had noted that the attendance at the Faith Youth Club had increased.

- 3.16.10 Jen commented that there are several church-employed youth workers in the Baldock and Letchworth area, all of whom are responsible for teams of volunteers and various youth clubs. These ventures usually aim to be responsive to the pastoral and spiritual development needs of young people and encourage young people to consider their own spirituality, rather than proselytising.
- 3.16.11 She also commented that the young people in Ashwell and Baldock feel they are very busy individuals and overloaded with activities. They were mainly seeking spaces in which they could just be themselves, to take time out. It was here that that they could find relief and get support with the pressures they experience as teenagers. Most of the young people that attend were from a white middle-class background and as such are often overlooked by targeted funding, despite sharing many of the emotional and relational needs of other young people.
- 3.16.12 Finally, Jen felt that there could be better communication between faith groups and statutory services to enable these groups to support one another and provide a more holistic youth service in the local areas.
- 3.16.13 Steve Gibbs (NHDC Anti-Social Behaviour Officer) then gave an overview of the diversionary activity that he carries out in North Hertfordshire.
- 3.16.14 The Youth Clubs had succeeded in attracting teenagers from the targeted groups of 'hard to reach' youngsters and those with challenging behaviour. The negative to this was that it had deterred other groups of teenagers from interacting with these targeted groups, when essentially the greatest benefit would be derived from them working and socialising together.
- 3.16.15 Steve highlighted the two groups of young people who attend youth activities. These were those willing and relatively easy to reach who would participate, work as a team and enjoy a degree of organisation and those hard to reach groups who may not so readily wish to participate in organised activities.
- 3.16.16 He noted that the main barriers to young people in attending any youth provision were travel and attendance costs, location of activity and the peer group in attendance.
- 3.16.17 From working with young people, Steve felt that they wanted adult style cafes that they could be involved in running themselves. He said that often young people wanted instructed activity, but that they recognised the need for adults to have oversight over the activity for reasons of safety. Steve felt that the Grange youth club and its staff offered a good example of youth work in action.
- 3.16.18 The Group also received a written statement from Helen Turner (NHDC Children and Young Persons Development Manager). See **Appendix C** for the full statement.
- 3.16.19 The NHDC Children and Young Persons Development Manager agreed with the observations made by the Group. She continued and noted the shift of responsibility from the council to Youth Connexions as the strategic lead for Youth provision. As this is a statutory duty of Youth Connexions, it reduces any duplication of resources.

3.16.20 She noted that Youth Connexions no longer deliver services to rural areas. Pro Action, which is funded by Hertfordshire County Council are now delivering services in rural areas. The organisation contributes to approximately 200 youth clubs and youth projects in Hertfordshire.

The range of services provided by Pro-Action include:

- Leisure
- Sport
- Education
- Training
- Funding help
- How to run a youth club – including insurance and advice on safeguarding and health and safety etc.

3.16.21 Pro-Action can enable a youth group to take part in regional or national sports events, or arrange training for young people who want to do voluntary work. The target group of Pro-Action is young people aged 11 to 19 years old or is extended up to 23 years old if they have special needs.

3.16.22 The Development Manager noted that the delivery of Youth services is an issue in the rural areas. Often funding organisations will not always support a programme if it only targets a small number of children as there is not sufficient proof of need; young people also often wish to remain in their own village, since the additional cost of transport for reaching services for those in rural areas is a determining factor. She did note that there are good volunteer led projects. These projects cannot work in isolation and require the assistance of paid development officers to support them. These are specialist posts and are therefore resource intensive in terms of training and expertise; it has also often been difficult to recruit to these positions, especially with large amounts of evening working.

3.17 **Cllr Marilyn Kirkland** visited the **Letchworth Youth Forum** to discuss the facilities that the teenagers would like to see in Letchworth. The Youth forum has been developed with the assistance of the Claire Morgan, Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City.

3.17.1 The teenagers suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Youth forum to be a café bar, decorated in a comfortable coffee shop style. This should be available for young people aged 13 and upwards on Friday evenings and at the weekends. The facility should have WiFi connectivity so that social networking is available and the installation of a projector to show TV and films should be considered. The facility should also have enough space for performances of live music.

3.17.2 The old SG6 Café attached to Plinston Hall was suggested as such a venue. This could be used one Sunday every month as a provisional arrangement. It was suggested that the café should be open from 2pm and it was proposed that a Café Launch could take place in April.

3.17.3 The Community Development officer had also pursued the development of a Skate Park in Letchworth. A meeting had taken place between the owners of Custom Riders in Letchworth and Youth Workers from Groundwork Hertfordshire. Custom Riders would be willing to relocate their shop and

manage the building if an industrial unit of sufficient size could be found for an indoor Skate park (along the lines of Adrenalin Alley in Corby).

- 3.17.4 The Community Development Officer had spoken to John Lewis the Chief Executive of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) who supported the idea in principle and suggested that she organise a visit to the Corby Skate Park and take the commercial properties manager from LGCHF. There are no suitable premises available at present but the partners are looking into whether the project would be financially viable. When premises do become available we would be asking Garden City Action to prepare a suitable funding bid and seek assistance with the design of the facility.
- 3.17.5 The Community Development Officer had subsequently contacted Alan Howard at the Letchworth Heritage Foundation in regards to using SG6 café at Plinston. He supported the idea in principle but felt that the Plinston may not be the best venue for the suggested activities. He did originally offer to meet with the Youth Forum to discuss which venues may be suitable in the Letchworth, but as he has now left the foundation, this meeting could only be scheduled once his successor or new contact was identified.

Conclusions

- 3.18.1 A wide range of facilities exist in North Hertfordshire for teenagers. It is recognized that there is good use of public funding being made in some areas and a large number of teenagers do access the services provided overall. However it is noted that the pattern of usage is highly variable. This causes some facilities to be unused or, worse, closed due to lack of attendance.
- 3.18.2 There is, and needs to remain, a very clear delineation between the formal and informal structured provision, particularly around sport, art and drama, for teenagers. Those formal provisions have a clear attraction for teenagers and are well supported by families. The facilities provided are well maintained and enthusiastic leadership is a hallmark of this provision. However, the review found that those with a 'looser' remit appear to have less appeal to teenagers; facilities are variable in quality and leadership appears to be de-motivated in comparison with formally structured activities.
- 3.18.3 There appears to be some public service provision which needs reconsideration in terms of its 'operating model'. This is evidenced by the facilities and the activities available for teenagers.
- 3.18.4 The informal facilities provided by many of the Churches are well attended. However there is concern that the spiritual dimension attached to this provision may be excluding certain groups of teenagers.
- 3.18.5 From the visit to the operations it would appear that the public sector provision of Youth Services is not used to its full potential in the District. In some instances the Group noticed that there exists a duplication of services that is not cost effective and there are still some needs of teenagers that are not being met.

3.19 Recommendations

- 3.19.1 There needs to be a more detailed consideration of how funding is used and how appropriate its use is in terms of providing good facilities for teenagers in North Hertfordshire. It is evident from the report that some needs are not being met and that some teenagers are being disadvantaged.
- 3.19.2 Youth provision that has a formal structure works very well in North Hertfordshire. Those facilities with an emphasis on cultural/sporting pastimes are enthusiastically supported and well organised.
- 3.19.3 Teenagers' facilities must be maintained and enhanced to benefit young people and the wider community in North Hertfordshire.
- 3.19.3 It is proposed that a working group be convened to address the identified gaps in the Youth Service Provision as contained in this report. The group will comprise of NHDC officers (predominately Community Development and Sports Development Officers) and relevant members, and relevant Hertfordshire County Council officers/members. This working group will seek to take forward the recommendations contained within this report. Whilst the issue of facilities for teenagers is important, it must also be recognised that this is not currently one of the three immediate priorities of North Herts District Council as identified in the Corporate Plan for 2011/12, and for which budget has already been set. The working group will therefore need to be mindful of other on-going commitments, resource availability, and the capacity and workload of the officers most likely to be involved; any improvements and activities assigned to North Herts District Council will need to be agreed following discussion with the relevant portfolio holder, and timed in order to fit with the determination of budget allocated by cabinet to take those actions forward.
- 3.19.4 Where feasible the group will aim to improve the quality and the interactive activities that are provided for Teenagers in North Hertfordshire. This work would be two-fold – firstly to increase the engagement levels of teenagers by providing facilities that are appropriate and appealing. This will focus particularly on the informally structured Youth provision in North Hertfordshire. Secondly to ensure that the operating model for Youth Service provision is one that is efficient, cost effective and meets the needs of the majority of teenagers in the locality.

Appendix A
North Hertfordshire District Council
ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS
Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

SCOPE

Terms of reference

To review and enhance the services and activities available to teenagers and the agencies (3rd sector and public sector) which work with them in town centres and rural areas

Expected Outcomes

Improved facilities for teenagers by identifying new premises and enhancing existing ones
Improved partnership working with youth agencies and the removal of duplication.
To sustain, facilitate and encourage volunteer working
To share good practice

Timeframe

Summer/Autumn 2010

Link with Council Priorities

Town centres are a priority for the Council

Potential witnesses

Head of Service, Children and Young People's Development Manager, CDOs, Youth Service Staff, Churches, the Police, staff, young people from successful clubs, Youth Councils and young people who do not participate in organised activities.

Key Questions

What do young people want to do?
What puts young people off using existing facilities?
How does the existing work done by agencies who work with young people need to change?
How can we encourage more volunteering and help to sustain existing volunteers?
How can we share knowledge, skills and best practice effectively across the district and between groups?

Information documents

Youth Service FSR
Herts County Council Youth Service Review

Membership

Cllr Judi Billing (Chair)	Cllr Paul Marment
Cllr Marilyn Kirkland	Cllr Michael Weeks

Portfolio Holder

Tricia Cowley

Lead Officer

Stuart Izzard, Community Development Manager

Support Officer

Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer (Spring 2010)

Appendix B



Youth Connexions Hertfordshire
North Herts District Team
Scrutiny Committee, *November 2010*

Judith Sutton, District Manager, North Herts

Overview of Youth Connexions



13-19 year olds (up to 25 years for young people with additional needs)

- **Information, Advice and Guidance**
- **Targeted Support**
- **Youth Work- Positive activities for young people**

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North Herts Team



- 3 x Full-time Youth Workers
- 26 Youth Support Workers delivering 167 hrs per week
- A proportion of the staffing budget is reserved to boost holiday projects
- Volunteers support work in projects
- 3 x Full-time Targeted Support Personal Advisers
- 6 x Full-time Universal Services Personal Advisers

Information Advice and Guidance



Personal Advisers deliver from:

- * **Schools, Colleges, Learning Providers**
- * **Community and outreach settings**
- * **Youth Connexions Centres**
 - Goldsmith Youth Connexions Centre - every weekday afternoon
 - Bancroft - every Thursday afternoon

Rising numbers who are NEET:

- Issues: 16-18 year olds - large number have significant issues and barriers, lack of jobs and appropriate level training opportunities
- How to ensure sexual health services are delivered effectively across district - C card available at Bancroft

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Weekly Youth Work Projects



Hitchin

- Bancroft Youth Centre

Royston

- Meridian Youth Centre

Baldock

- Baldock Youth Centre
- Youth Council

Letchworth

- Grange Youth Project
- Jackmans Youth Project

Rural

- Kimpton Youth Project

Cross-District

- Detached/Diversiory

Targeted Work



- LDD weekly project for young people with learning difficulties
- Young parents' project - weekly project
- Targeted NEET work - individual support in projects

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Weekends



- Increasing weekend opening
- Developing programme of music events once a month in each town (Meridian, Bancroft, Baldock, Letchworth)
- Programme of activities and visits
- Diversionary activities with partner organisations (targeting areas with high NEET numbers)

Partnership Work



- Diversionary Work
- Weekend Work
- Summer Programme
- B Festival/B Safe
- Voluntary Sector
- Youth Councils
- Young Parents Project
- Targeted NEET work
- DCTP 11-19 Sub Group/local youth issues groups

Appendix B

Highlights



- Summer Programme
- Diversionary work with partner agencies
- LDD project
- Young Parents' Project
- Young people's participation- Baldock Youth Council (B Festival/ B Safe campaign)

YOF 2009 -10



- Big Spend facilitated by Youth Connexions, decisions by young people
- YOF has supported the following Youth Connexions projects this year:
 - Baldock Youth Council (for B Fest) £11k
 - Zone Asia (for Rhythms of the World) £1k
 - LDD Project (for residential) £4k
 - Young Parents £10k
- Issue: ability to support in future as funding not available

Appendix B



Evaluation 2010/2011

Team Performance



- Increasing number of young people attended our projects and actively participated
- 27% increase in our Contacts from April – September 2010 compared to the same period in 2009
- Increasing number of young people earned Recorded Outcomes

Appendix B

Volunteers



Young People:

- V talent volunteer at Bancroft
- Developing young people in older age range at LDD project to volunteer
- Young people volunteer in organising and planning events

Adults: Volunteers work in our projects - highly Valued (complete Foundation Youth Work Qualification, regular supervision)

Views of Young People



Appendix B

What Young People Say Survey 2010



235 young people questioned about their experiences of Youth Connexions Projects during two weeks in October

The following percentage agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements

- Tried something new - 84%
- Would recommend to a friend - 88%
- Found staff welcoming - 91%
- Project organised well - 87%
- Pay the same again - 77%

Views of Young People Survey 2010 (continuation)



- Young people considered that what we did best was providing youth work/positive activities, with friendly staff, a place to make and meet friends and somewhere to try new activities.
- Young people identified the following issues as important to them: Drugs, alcohol, smoking, education and anti-bullying, sexual health, body image, employment, access to low cost activities
- Young people identified that projects had provided activities or information that addressed these issues.

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What Young People say they want



- Activities in the evenings and at weekends that are low cost
- More music events at weekends
- More sporting activities
- To be able to talk about their issues and problems
- Somewhere to go that is safe
- Better transport

Youth Connexions Future Strategy For North Herts



- Continue to develop our work in all four towns
- In rural areas work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other agencies
- Continue to support Pro-Action, and work with them to develop voluntary led provision
- Programme of weekend work-focus on Fri/Sat evenings
- Flexible detached work which links with partner agencies
- Good quality holiday programmes
- Maximise use of available buildings, and encourage use by other groups
- Improve publicity and use of web portal, Channel Mogo

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Snappy G's (Press item extract)



Snappy G's Film Makers Win Countywide Competition

Groups of young people from across the county showcased their achievements in National Youth Work Week. Young people talked about the benefits they have gained from attending youth projects, youth councils, events and activities, and the way youth work supports their personal and social development.

The results of a county-wide film making competition produced by young people were announced. Judged by young people from all over Hertfordshire who voted on the youth website channelmogo, the films illustrated projects and activities they are involved in.

First prize was won by **Snappy G's Youth Project** based at Bancroft Youth Centre, Hitchin, which runs activities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.



Appendix C

**Statement from Helen Turner
NHDC Children and Young Persons Development Manager**

There is not much to add to the observations already made by the scrutiny officer and members of the task and finish group. Whilst my job title is “Children and Young Persons Development Manager”, the reality is my work programme is predominantly concerned with services for 5-13 years olds, which is what NHDC directly delivers.

As part of the corporate planning cycle some years ago, it was agreed that the policy would be for the authority to make a gradual shift to require Youth Connexions to take on the strategic lead for Youth provision in the area, given that they have the statutory duty to do so, and in order to prevent duplication of effort or resources. The level of effectiveness to which they may or may not be doing so is something on which members have already had feedback; we are also aware that they have had and continue to have significant resourcing issues themselves.

Youth Connexions pulled out of delivering services in the rural areas a few years ago, however Pro-Action was established (and is funded by HCC) to meet this gap and support voluntary groups to deliver here. The rural areas continue to be a challenge that we face with our own services for younger children. The numbers of young people in any one village often make it difficult to sustain provision. Funders for example will not often support a programme working with a small handful of children. However, our experience is that many children and young people wish to remain within their own villages. I don't doubt there are successful examples of provision that draws people from a wide rural area but it is not an experience we commonly have. Rural areas do therefore often get left out but when you are reliant on receiving external grants, there is a real issue for delivery organisations in how to solve this and any solution will require discussion with grant funding bodies on changes to criteria to encompass the needs of very small groups.

Again, there are some extremely successful examples of projects run by volunteers and brilliant examples of good practice. However, for the main, the push to run services where the majority of ‘staff’ are volunteers is troubling. There is no endless supply of volunteers, commitment can sometimes be varied and you still need paid development officers to support these groups with training, advice etc. The level of training and expertise required by youth workers is considerable and therefore the expectation currently in the trade press that youth services should all be run with volunteers is frustrating.

The outsourcing situation within HCC would need to be directed to Judith Sutton, or indeed her manager at Youth Connexions.

Helen Turner
Children and Young Persons Development Manager

12 November 2010