

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MEETING

Note of meeting held in Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre on Monday 20 Feb 2012 at 2 pm

Attendance:

Chair: Cllr Elaine Aitken, City of Edinburgh Council
Heather Levy, Chair, Firrhill Community Council
Gordon MacDonald, Member of Scottish Parliament
PC Jim Gillanders, Community Police Officer, Firrhill High School/WHEC¹
Capt Harry Harrison, Unit Welfare Office, 3 Rifles
Carol Tuzun, Youth Worker, CEC-CLD² Firrhill High School
John Spence, Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre
Cllr Jason Rust, City of Edinburgh Council
Margaret Walker, Buckstone Youth Project
Insp. Stephen Dolan, Lothian and Borders Police
Jack Laird, Oxgangs Community Residents Association
Maria Gray, CEC-CLD, Area Manager
Dennis Williams, Chair, Fairmilehead Community Council
Cllr Eric Barry, City of Edinburgh Council.

Apologies:

Steven Gillies, Youth Cafe
Capt Hugh Wilson, 1 Scots

The Chair opened the meeting and gave a summary of its purpose, which was to bring together the different groups/organisations working in the Firrhill area that have an involvement in youth issues, to find out what facilities/activities they provide/organise and their value.

Inspector Dolan explained that this was a follow-on meeting to one he had organised at Oxgangs Police Station about 6 weeks ago on issues related to crime in the area. One of the views from that meeting was a feeling that there was a lack of engagement with youths in the area. It was felt worthwhile investigating whether or not this view was correct and if there were areas where more could be done to support them and their interests.

¹ Wester Hailes Education Centre

² Community Learning and Development

The Chair expressed there may be a lot going on that people were not aware of. This could cause duplication of effort, which in the present financial climate of budget restraints, was to be avoided. With this in mind she asked each attendee to introduce themselves and give a summary on the work carried out by their organisations.

M Gray gave an outline on the youth events facilitated by Pentland Community Centre, the periods the activities took place and the constraints on the Centre. Youth clubs are open up to 30 weeks in the year and are generally well attended.

Oxgangs Care initially and then CEC-CLD recently funded two Street Workers to engage with kids on the street and get their thoughts. In general they wanted some place to go but the difficulty is finding a suitable venue.

J Spence gave an outline on the youth events facilitated by Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre and its funding as a charitable organisation. The hall is well used by dance groups. The Centre supports the Dunedin Canmore youth project and provides a drop-in facility for local kids. John is supportive of the idea of youths running their own clubs. There is potential for development but Centre held back by lack of funding.

M Gray remarked that times change and what young people wanted to do once is not always the case. They want to do different things nowadays.

J Spence remarked that the ONC used to provide facilities for people out of work or looking for work

Margaret Walker gave an outline of the operating times and facilities of the Buckstone Youth Project. Youth groups events well attended with numbers reaching 30 at a time, but lack of volunteers meant they spent more time policing the events instead of engaging with young people. There was a need for more support and more training for support workers.

Heather Levy remarked that transport was a problem for young people unless they were going into the city centre

J Laird remarked on and it was a general consensus that there was a difficulty in getting volunteers which was not helped by the need to vet and train people and the cost in doing so. Some people were put off by the requirement to apply for a CRB/PVG check but even if this was not the case there were difficulties in funding the number of volunteers required.

PC J Gillanders gave an outline on the youth events facilitated by Firrhill High School and which were well used by a number of organised youth groups. With this being a PFI school there was a cost in hiring these facilities.

C Tullin spoke on Firrhill High School's involvement in the *Active Schools* national programme, the aim of which is to give children and young people the chance to get involved in sport and physical activity while they are at school but also has extra curriculum activities.

Remark was made that there were also territorial issues that stopped kids from going to different parts of the local area.

Capt Harrison gave an outline of facilities at the barracks, which had been available in the past. Restrictions had been introduced when the troops were at home.

All agreed to the need to attract volunteers to enable groups to properly engage with kids and find out what it is they want. It was not just a case of doing it but determining why we were doing it.

Reference was made to the Pentland Youth Forum, which is one of the city's *Local Youth Forums*, which look at and discuss youth issues. The forums are supported by youth workers from local community learning and development team or youth organisation but local schoolchildren do not appear to have become involved in this initiative.

Comment was made that the school does not provide facilities for local people or their children.

G MacDonald, MSP remarked that children/youths may not want to be organised but want someplace to hang out. A number of people commented that kids hang out outside the library and the Broadway.

Insp. Dolan remarked he was keen to devote personnel to support youth activities and develop relationships.

Cllr E Barry supported the comment that kids do not want to be organised but want a place to hang out, watch TV or play electronic games. Many come from overcrowded houses where they are unable to watch the programmes they want to or to play their games so they go out into the streets

A comment made that you can get kids to attend youth groups but the problem is maintaining the facility year on year.

The Buckstone Youth Project ask kids, when they arrive at the centre, to write down what they would like from the facility. The responses are evaluated and the project team try to accommodate within the programme where facilities and funding allows.

Capt Harrison indicated that the MOD had started a new scheme for funding projects but he was not sure of the criteria for application – would investigate

Cllr J Rust presented his apologies for having to leave the meeting but noted that youth provisions would be getting raised on the Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership agenda.

The Chair asked if a local youth forum could be set up.

J Spence opposed the use of street workers unless they were local people. Did not consider there was any value in bringing in outsiders.

The Chair asked what did the meeting want to do and how did they want to do it?

G MacDonald remarked on a recent survey carried out in Wester Hailes where the kids simply wanted the kick pitches repaired. There were three in the area and all had been vandalised.

H Levy remarked that the new sports pavilion would be opening shortly, suggested it may present an opportunity to hold a local event to mark the occasion. D Williams supported the idea of a football tournament

Insp. Dolan supported the idea of organising 'blue light' discos in the three community centres and was prepared to take the lead with other groups assisting.

Capt. Harrison indicated the Army have a community centre at Dregghorn but it also suffers from a lack of volunteers.

H Levy proposed the holding of a football tournament or fun day at Colinton Mains Park on the day of the official opening of the new sports pavilion and if accepted would approach Oxfords AC with a view to them taking the lead in organising it. Would also contact the relevant council officer to determine the opening date and circulate the information.

There was a proposal to develop a youth mailing list and to include youths who reside in the area but attend other high schools.

Remark made on funding and proposed making an application to Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership.

H Levy spoke about social equality

G MacDonald indicated that he has information on his website on funding sources. H Levy added that similar information was held in the Library.

PC Gillanders remarked on disseminating information to the *RUTS* group at Firrhill High School.

The Chair summed up the decisions of the meeting.

1. To promote the organisation of a football tournament and/or fun day to be held on the date of the official opening of the Sports Pavilion in Colinton Mains Park. H Levy to action initial contacts.
2. To promote the organisation of a series of youth discos to be held in local community centres or other suitable local venues throughout the course of this year. Insp. Dolan to take the lead on this action.
3. To develop a mailing list that would enable two-way communication with the youth in the community. Where facilitated by the school it should include all schools within whose catchment area this community is situated. M Gray and C Tuzun to lead
4. To look at the application process for MOD grants for community funding
5. To investigate funding sources to relieve groups from the burden of disclosure vetting when seeking to use volunteer workers in youth projects.

Date of next Meeting: Monday 19th March in the Oxfords Neighbourhood Centre at 1 pm.

This note was drafted by Jim Napier, Firrhill Community Council.