

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL BOARDS**

Notes of the meeting of the DOVER TOWN Neighbourhood Forum held on 11 February 2009 at Town Council Offices, Dover at 4.00pm

Present: DDC Councillor Kevin Mills Chairman
 KCC Councillor Gordon Cowan Vice-Chairman

Other Councillors and 15 members of the public; Phillip and Hayley from Archers Court Maths & Computing College; Demi, Holly, Charlie and Stephan representing Dover District Youth Forum; a representative from Dover Boys Grammar School; Nadeem Aziz Chief Executive DDC; Bill Butler Area Youth Officer KCC Youth Service, Yvonne Holder Youth Officer DDC.

1. Chairman's welcome

Cllr Kevin Mills welcomed those attending the Forum which would focus on young people of Dover, their issues and ideas

2. Notes of previous meeting

Were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

3. Support for Young People

3.1 Bill Butler spoke about his formal and informal work with young people. Funding from Kent Youth Service enabled groups of young people to suggest trips to events and venues and provided travel for outings. Volunteers were always needed together with new ideas for the Youth Forum. Youth centres should be open at weekends and in school holidays.

3.2 DDC Cllr. Julie Rook reported the Teen Café in the Discovery Centre, Dover needed staff to ensure it was fully open.

3.3 Nadeem Aziz reiterated the need for commitment and involvement by volunteers to compliment the provision of assets such as Leisure Centres and skate parks. DDC could not force developers to open cinemas, bowling alleys, etc as part of Dover regeneration but the fast track rail link and development of Dover Port would help to create the right climate for more facilities. Dover had a limited catchment area and a population of only 40,000, unlike Westwood Cross in Thanet which could draw from a wider area.

3.4 DDC Cllr. Kit Smith asked for information on where in Dover volunteers were needed and Bill Butler reported that successful volunteering sometimes came out of Anti Social Behaviour meetings. Helpers were still needed with trips and projects by young people.

4. 'What's on your mind?'

4.1 The updated play area in Kearsney Abbey park does not have much for children of secondary school age to do (Phillip). Cllr. Julie Rook explained the Council was putting in a bid for £50,000 to upgrade equipment for children and young people including swings, slides and rubber surfaces and invited Philip to contact her to discuss what older children

needed before the bid was completed. Pencester Gardens in Dover had a big swing which was suitable for older and disabled children.

4.2 Dover cinema does not have many up-to-date films; could the Council help to improve it as, with all the shops closing Dover was not a great place and to lose the cinema would be a catastrophe (Stephan) Cllr Julie Rook agreed businesses were struggling but explained that DDC could not help commercial enterprises. Nadeem Aziz felt that cinemas only worked as multiplexes; the single screen cinema in Deal had closed but with major developments in Dover, including the Waterfront, there might be sufficient future demand to attract an operator. Were there volunteers who would take young people to cinemas? Bill Butler reported St George's Hall in Deal has a voluntary film club where schools choose the films. A member of the public asked whether young people would be interested in back-to-back Pixar animated films on one Saturday a month which could be suggested to the operator of the Dover cinema and, having heard that this could be of interest, the Chairman suggested pursuing the topic after the meeting. Cllr Kit Smith advised there were cinemas in Deal Schools and Stephan added that St. Edmunds School had a film club but needed more people to attend.

4.3 How do young people get to know about these meetings; Stephan had seen the notice in the Dover Discovery Centre but doubted whether young people would look at leaflets handed out at schools. If someone came to talk to schools, during the day, and gave a good presentation then a few more young people would be interested. Using the internet and sites like Facebook, Beebo, Twitter, etc. could be a way of spreading information together with the Youth Forum.

4.4 How can swimming facilities be improved? Nadeem Aziz acknowledged that Dover Leisure Centre was "past its sell-by date" and a new Leisure Centre was needed; it was hoped that a complex would be part of the future building scheme.

4.5 Fostered children receive free passes for Dover Leisure Centre and Tides; could this not be extended to all children so that others in the same family didn't feel left out? Cllr Cowan stated that Maidstone Borough Council has a free facilities scheme for children in care and Nadeem Aziz replied that the Council was looking at the possibility of free swimming but would not be able to provide it all year round, only for as long as money was available.

4.6 A young carer's time off under the provisions in Deal has stopped; was there a scheme in Dover? Harriet Robbins from Astor College confirmed that there was a group at the College and she would provide the contact details.

4.7 Young people were asked where they like to hang out and replied Kearsney Abbey, River, café in the Discovery Centre on Friday and Saturday nights and for events such as Christmas and Halloween. One in four shops were empty so could not some of these could be used for young people's facilities? Nadeem Aziz advised this would be up to commercial landlords of the properties. High street shops were suffering from combined effect of internet shopping and big shopping centres and more would close unless developments like the Waterfront brought in more business.

4.8 Some people cause problems in Pencester park; would it be possible to have a dedicated Community Officer or someone in uniform looking like police? Sgt. Guy

Thompson agreed there had been problems in the previous year; the area is now being patrolled together with youth outreach workers and parking services officers. There was not enough money for more PCSOs but if problems were reported through Youth Workers, Youth Forum, PCSOs or by telephoning the police, then resources could be targeted on “fester” areas starting with youth outreach workers, then PCSOs and finally police officers if necessary.

4.9 When we go out to Canterbury under 18 nightclub ‘Chill’ from 7.00pm to 11.00pm we have to make our own way back from bus or train and don’t like walking through Pencester or Market Square because of gangs. Can we have a club like that in Dover so we don’t have to travel so far; Teen Fusion in Deal is further than Canterbury. Yvonne Holder reported there was no nightclub premises in Dover; Funky Monkey only holds about 120 but Rivals in Deal can hold up to 650, with an average of 500 attending each month. Dover Town Hall costs about £600 for an evening. Chairman asked if it were best to look at a nightclub in Dover or providing transport to other places; Nadeem Aziz mentioned that cruise terminal is empty for a lot of time; perhaps this could be explored. Rivals (F S Leisure) pay for flyers, at least 4 door staff and bar staff, PCSOs attend plus two youth workers, DDC Youth Officer and Kent police Neighbourhood Sergeant. Entrance costs £4 with a flyer plus cost of transport to get there. Cllr Cowan offered £600 from his KCC grant money to fund one event at Dover Town Hall with talks on how to proceed after that. Yvonne Holder to take action forward.

4.10 Could the freedom pass on buses be extended to trains? Parent has to pay £15 for me to go to school because I can’t get the cheaper rate before 9.00am; if I wait until 9.00am I’m late for school. Cllr Julie Rook agreed that this was a big problem and the scheme needed to be extended from 16 to 18 if young people were being encouraged to stay in education.

4.11 Do you get your information from young people from Forums like this; can we talk to councillors face to face? Nadeem Aziz and Yvonne Holder explained DDC Youth Forum meets every Wednesday at Dover Discovery Centre. There was an open consultation with young people on their issues and concerns for the Dover District Youth Strategy. DDC is in the process of forming a Youth Policy which will include a DDC Youth Council to be developed by working with schools’ councils and other youth forums. Yvonne is happy to act as go-between if any young person wants to speak to a Councillor or police but it would be 3-4 years before a DDC Youth Council was formed with money and powers as training was essential for DDC staff, Councillors and young people based upon the “Hear by Rights” agenda so it did not just become a ‘tick box’ exercise. The representatives of DD Youth Forum felt they were ready to take decisions now rather than wait 3-4 years when they would no longer be young.

4.12 Cllr. Goodwin explained project by Dover Boys Grammar School to create and run an allotment, growing vegetable to sell to Age Concern; land had been identified but public liability insurance was needed at £600 for 2 allotments and help would be welcome.

4.13 Gangs were a problem in other areas too but in Tower Hamlets activities and sports were being provided for 12 weeks with certificates and possibly football courses. Stephan asked if police could take young people who might be causing trouble to play football which would improve relationships. Guy Thompson explained police cars could not be used for that but PCSOs helped with liaison, identifying problem groups, sending the

outreach bus and finding activities; police resources are limited. A new pilot scheme was taking place where PCSOs and KCC Wardens give rewards to well behaved young people by giving tickets to cinemas, etc.

4.14 Nadeem Aziz was asked whether plans for a large cinema screen in Market Square would benefit people and replied that it would be a great facility for sporting events like the Olympics, would be in place for 15 years and would be the only one in Kent.

4.15 Why was a casino planned for the Waterfront development; would it not increase gambling and would not money be better spent on more police?(Stephan) Nadeem Aziz explained that some cruise ship passengers would enjoy a casino, a balance of facilities was needed and rates from commercial properties, including any casino, go towards supporting the police service.

The Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and invited discussions after the meeting on specific topics which had been raised.

The meeting ended at 5.45pm.