

From: Alex King – Deputy Leader

Peter Sass – Head of Democratic Services

To: County Council –15 December 2011

Subject: Petition Scheme Debate – Youth Services in Deal

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Details of a Petition received which will be the subject of a debate in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

For Decision

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## Introduction

1 (1) In accordance with the Petition Scheme agreed at the County Council meeting on 22 July 2010, any petition on a County Council matter relating to a specific District Council area that has more than 1,000 signatures will trigger a debate at County Council.

(2) The process for the debate is that the Lead Petitioner(s) will be invited to speak to the petition for up to 5 minutes in total. There will then be a debate of up to 35 Minutes (with each Member speaking for 3 minutes) before the Cabinet Member is invited to respond for a maximum of 5 minutes. As the subject matters for this petition relates to matters that are the responsibility of the Council's Executive, the County Council may decide whether to make a recommendation to the relevant Cabinet Member to inform the decision-making process.

## Petition – Opposing the potential closure of Aylesham Youth Club and Linwood Youth Centre Deal

2 (1) A Petition was submitted to the Head of Democratic Services by Mr C Cowan following the October meeting of the County Council, opposing the potential closure of Aylesham Youth Club and Linwood Youth Centre Deal. The petition contains 3,994 signatures and therefore has triggered a County Council Debate. A statement from the Lead Petitioners, Ms P Hawkins and Ms P Brivio is attached (**Appendix 1**). Ms P Hawkins, Ms P Brivio and Mr T Johnston will be attending the meeting and speaking to the petition.

(2) A briefing report from the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities relating to the petition is attached. (**Appendix 2**)

## RECOMMENDATION

3. The County Council is invited to respond to the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities in respect of this petition.

**Peter Sass**  
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Background Documents: None

### Statement from Petitioners

Kent Youth Service with its army of qualified and experienced youth workers and volunteers – is something to be proud of – not something to be demolished or off-loaded. Following the riots earlier this year, David Cameron chose to make his key note speech from a Youth Club in his constituency and said one way of providing guidance and moral leadership for youngsters was via Youth Centres.

These Centres must be more than Youth Clubs and table tennis. Many have IT facilities and all must have Youth Workers to give help and advice whenever required. Their future should be secure – not under threat of funding cuts now or in the future.

The proposals contained in the consultation document on changes to the Youth Service do not address issues relating to the large geographical area that Dover District Council (DCC) covers and the different needs in the areas at present covered by the Youth Service. The services that exist at the moment operate in three very different areas, one a rural community, another is on the edge of town with a large catchment area and the third in a town centre environment, therefore any proposals for change must reflect the diverse nature that youth services need to address and should not expect young people to travel the distance of 9 miles between these communities to access the facilities and face the same journey home.

Alternative proposals so far suggested do not seem to address the issues that closure of any of the centres would bring. Outreach workers and school based activities will not be applicable to many of the youngsters who at present attend Aylesham and Linwood (indeed there is no school at Aylesham and it is not clear where alternative youth work in the area would take place). It should also be acknowledged that many young people actively avoid and/or dislike school and would not be happy attending any activity on school premises.

Before coming to any firm conclusions on the future of the service, there should be an audit of the community and voluntary sector to establish what other services are available in the wider community.

Also an assessment of need and capability on a district basis should be conducted and the assessment should be led by an independent group comprising representatives of the community and voluntary sector.

It is important to remember what our commitment to young people must be - in DDC's Youth Strategy for 2008-2012 it refers to the Children's Act 2004 and Every Child Matters and includes amongst others references to "Be Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Achieve Economic Well-Being, make a positive contribution" and these are headings that the future of any Youth Service should aim to achieve.

The British Youth Service was the first in the world and established a universal right for young people to enjoy learning beyond the classroom. It gave a voice and place for those who do not have a vote, but who have a lot to offer and say. It must be preserved.

Pam Hawkins & Pam Brivio

Report to: County Council – 15 December 2011

Report from: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities

Subject: Youth Service Provision in Dover

Classification: Unrestricted

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In October 2011 a petition was submitted to Kent County Council with 3944 signatures referring to the provision of Youth Services within Dover District. As a consequence, this matter is referred to County Council. The wording of the petition was as follows:

*“Save our Youth Services in Kent. Add your voice to the Labour Party’s demand for Kent County Council to save Youth Services in Kent. We say “NO” to the plan to close Aylesham Youth Club and Linwood Youth Centre, Deal”*

The petition was raised as a response to the public consultation on the future of Youth Services in Kent which took place from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011 to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011. The proposal for consultation was to deliver a core service level in each district of KCC staff delivering a Youth Hub, Street-based Youth Work and school- based Community Youth Tutor(s). This core delivery is proposed to be supplemented by the commissioning of youth work services at a local level to continue to ensure the delivery of youth work opportunities.

The proposal offers the opportunity for Kent County Council to continue to deliver a first class Youth Service for the young people of Kent whilst working closely with local communities and Locality Boards to make decisions on what youth provision would best serve local communities.

A common misconception with regard to the proposals has been the assumption that a district Youth Hub will be the only form of youth work provision in an area with the concern that young people would have to travel large distances in order to access services, however, this was never suggested in the proposed model.

The intention of the proposals has always been to look for new opportunities for communities to have a greater role in shaping and even running their own services. As such there has never been a decision to close either Aylesham Youth Centre or Linwood Youth Centre.

We recognize that local communities are, rightly, very proud of their local youth service provision which is why we do not intend to make any rushed decision but will work alongside the Locality Boards to ensure that we commission exactly the right kind of services for communities like Deal and Linwood.