

## STROUD DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2000 at 4.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud.

### MEMBERS OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENT:-

Nina Costigan (Chair)	Thomas Keble
Stewart McKane (Vice Chair)	Katharine Lady Berkeley's
Fred Hulls	Archway
Cheryl Holley	Maidenhill
Lee Barr	Maidenhill
Lawrence Anderson	Marling
Dan Snell	Marling
Thomas Paterson	Rednock

### Also Present:-

Alan Caig	Head of Leisure, Stroud District Council
Fred Chance	Stroud Team Leader, Youth and Community Service
David Marshall	Information Officer, Stroud District Council
Lesley Williams	Chair of Stroud District Council
Pete Wintle	Public Transport Manager, Gloucestershire County Council
Rob Arkell	Operations Manager, Stagecoach, Stroud

### Apologies:-

Alex Hughes, Lucy Mather, Katy Costigan, second rep KLB, Lee Stopford (Lee Barr substituted)

<u>Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2000</u>	<b>Accepted as a correct record.</b>
<u>Neighbourhood Watch</u>	<p>Mr Eddie Whitlock and Mr Bernard Brown from the Neighbourhood Watch Association (Severn Area) were present to explain that the Association was keen to involve young adults in its work.</p> <p>The Youth Council was asked to consider the introduction of an element of a crime prevention process within schools which Mr Whitlock explained (and which would also be detailed in a handout to be circulated with the minutes of the meeting).</p> <p>The Association felt that the Council's views were valuable</p>

	<p>and the initial proposals he had outlined were only given as a guide; any scheme would not be implemented without the Council's advice and agreement.</p> <p>The proposals included the postcoding of equipment and cycles, a pupil to act as co-ordinator for the school and a point of contact for the Association and to promote crime awareness amongst pupils.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that the proposals would be taken back to each school and a volunteer pupil sought to be involved; the matter would be brought back to the next meeting.</b></p>
<p><b><u>Stroud Substance Action Group</u></b></p>	<p>Mr Phil Sullivan, Community Safety Officer for Stroud District Council, spoke of his role as Chairman of the Stroud Substance Action Group and gave details of those involved. He explained the many areas of work which the Group undertook and how it was regarded as one of the most effective in Gloucestershire.</p> <p>One particular area of concern was the issue of under-age drinking and the Group had felt that the Youth Council's views on this would be both a different perspective and extremely valuable. The Group would be interested to hear what the Youth Council considered to be the problems, how they could be resolved and what help would be needed to achieve these.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that this issue would be reported back to each school and the matter discussed at the next meeting of the Youth Council.</b></p>
<p><b><u>Transport</u></b></p>	<p>The Chair introduced Mr Wintle (Public Transport Manager, GCC) and Mr Arkell (Operations Manager, Stagecoach) to the meeting and explained their individual responsibilities.</p> <p>The Youth Council members questioned them on various aspects of public transport:-</p> <p><b><u>Pricing of 'bus journeys</u></b></p> <p>Mr Arkell explained Stagecoach fare structure, which now was only reviewed once per year. He detailed the primary costs which a commercial 'bus company had to cover which were running expenses and staffing. VAT on fuel had been a further cost to be offset against revenue. In his view the current fare prices were not exceptional when compared to other providers.</p> <p><b><u>Identification of drivers</u></b></p> <p>One member criticised the current policy whereby drivers did not wear any form of individual identification and this made it difficult to address a complaint.</p>

Mr Arkell explained that the legal requirements relating to drivers' work meant that detailed records were kept which were audited. In the case of a complaint it would not be a difficulty to identify an individual driver.

### **Frequency of 'buses**

In response to a question about the lack of evening services and the frequency of 'buses, Mr Arkell suggested that he would need a specific example to identify any problems. However, he advised that the company needed a balance between providing a service and its viability; where it was felt that revenue would be available a service would be offered and if subsequent usage proved less than expected, the service would be adjusted accordingly. In relation to school services he stated that most of these were subsidised by the County Council.

Mr Wintle added that Stroud services had been eroded because of lack of use. This, in his opinion, was due to a variety of factors, not least of which was that social requirements had changed. If a service afforded a commercial opportunity, it would be provided but not otherwise.

### **Discounts**

A member suggested that it would be commercially viable to encourage more use of 'buses by students by applying a discount, as was available on rail transport. He considered that specific routes to the facilities which young people would use, e.g. cinemas, would be well used and provide the viability needed.

Group travel for students was another possibility; Mr Arkell agreed that this was a useful suggestion which he would look into.

It was also suggested that discounts should be applied more equitably, a child fare could be set at  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{2}{3}$  price, and one applied for regular travel.

Mr Wintle commented that he understood that lobbying was taking place to include young persons in concessionary fare schemes which normally only targeted the elderly.

In response to questions, Mr Arkell felt that an age identity card for students was probably useful but, to date, he had not been aware of any particular problems where students under 16 years had been overcharged with an adult ticket.

He also considered that, as the vehicle maintenance regime within the company was in excess of legal

requirements, this was not a valid argument against using public transport. In his view the main obstacle was that the 'car culture' was difficult to change.

### **Transport Plans**

Mr Wintle added that another aspect was the need for transport plans/policies and infrastructure in line with sustainable development; he suggested that the present Government was encouraging progress in this way. However, rural areas, like the majority of the Stroud District, were particularly affected as these areas required a greater subsidy/support.

One member commented that the GCC action plan did not place as much emphasis on 'bus transport as it did for rail travel. Mr Wintle explained that any plan needed to provide a balanced view between all the transport options available within the area and in order to obtain central government funding. Whilst he appreciated the need for an integrated transport system within the county, the County Council had little influence and could only lobby for the financial support required.

Rail travel was a recognised and significant part of the proposals. Whilst he agreed that there were few stations within the Stroud District at present, the Council would do its best to encourage more, although it had to be appreciated that finances were stretched between many other services as well.

Mr Chance commented that a policy specifically for transport for young people would be helpful as they were considerable users of public transport.

### **Publicity for Public Transport**

Mr Wintle detailed the distribution of train and 'bus information throughout the District and was happy to look into any other options which the Youth Council might raise.

A suggestion was made to provide information to schools and youth centres and to undertake surveys of users; he added that three members of his staff already communicated with users on a very regular basis and this included open days and parent days at schools.

A particular problem was raised about the accuracy of the information provided. Mr Wintle explained that, despite lobbying the Government to accept only price changes twice a year, operators were permitted to change fares with 42 days notice. In some instances the County Council was not given the information and was therefore unaware of the changes. Where, however, these were known, Parish Councils were advised well in advance. In rural areas

	<p>commercial operators were not prepared to take a financial risk and the County Council would set a subsidised fare, these were available in their booklet.</p> <p>Mr Arkell commented that Stagecoach aimed to amend its fares once a year.</p> <p>Mr Wintle gave details of the work being undertaken to provide information through a web site.</p> <p><b><u>Checks on Drivers</u></b></p> <p>Stagecoach operated a criminal check system for all its drivers.</p> <p>The County Council relied on checks being undertaken through the schools; where routes were subsidised by them the requirements for PCV licence holders were used. Where evidence of serious crime became known to him, licences were revoked; he did consider that the Government needed to tighten the licensing regime.</p> <p><b><u>Conditions of 'bus passes</u></b></p> <p>Mr Arkell confirmed that drivers were issued with guidelines for 'bus passes and did not feel that the inclusion of these on the passes would be of benefit. Where extreme problems had occurred, he explained the procedures which the company adopted, which included working with both the parents and the school.</p> <p><b><u>Access to the south of the District</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed that public transport access to the south of the District was a problem. One 'bus scheme connecting Wotton-under-Edge with the Cam/Dursley halt had failed.</p> <p>It was felt that more should be done to prepare for the future; Mr Wintle suggested that in some instances the lack of revenue funding rather than capital money was also a difficulty.</p> <p>The Chair thanked both the representatives for attending the meeting and for the information they had given.</p>
<p><b><u>Youth Council notepaper</u></b></p>	<p>David Marshall submitted a few samples of possible headed notepaper which might be used.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that Youth Council members would produce some more possible logos for consideration at the next meeting.</b></p>

<b><u>Any Other Business</u></b>	
<b><u>Press Releases</u></b>	<p>David Marshall explained that the Youth Council's press officers were due to arrange a press release on the aims of the Council.</p> <p>However, recently the Stroud News and Journal had offered to do a news item on the Youth Council. The Chair commented that she had been in contact with the Editor, Skip Walker, and had felt that this would be an excellent opportunity for publicising the Council.</p> <p>Alan Caig suggested that the paper would also be able to run the item in the local Dursley and Wotton-u-Edge papers within their publishing group.</p> <p><b>It was unanimously agreed to accept the offer.</b></p>
<b><u>Presentation to Stroud District Council Meeting</u></b>	<p>The Chair congratulated the Youth Council members who had been involved in the presentation and those who had supported them. She felt that it had been successful and that the District Councillors had been very supportive.</p> <p>There had been a request by the Councillors to receive copies of the Youth Council minutes and the Chair also thought that an invitation might be sent in return for them to attend a future meeting, if they wished.</p> <p><b>The suggestion to send out copies of the minutes was supported.</b></p>
<b><u>Nailsworth/Horsley area</u></b>	<p>Cllr Mrs Mills had asked the Youth Council to consider representation from students who lived in the Nailsworth/Horsley area as this appeared to be lacking in the membership of the Youth Council.</p> <p><b>The representative from Archway agreed to contact a student who lived in that area who might be interested in joining the Youth Council.</b></p>
<b><u>Youth Council Web Site</u></b>	<p>Mr Martyn Harwood, the Director of Corporate Services for the District Council, had offered to provide a web site specifically for the Youth Council.</p> <p><b>The Youth Council were pleased to accept the offer and Dan Snell agreed to look at designing a suitable site.</b></p>
<b><u>Budget from the District Council</u></b>	<p>David Marshall suggested that although final consideration of the budget might not be possible until September this year, the Council should think about how they might wish to allocate the funds. Initially, he thought a small group of representatives might discuss how the money could be allocated and bring their ideas back to the Youth Council to</p>

	assist in the final decisions.  It was agreed that Alan Caig would contact the Chair and Vice Chair to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter and report back, if possible, by the next meeting.
<b><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></b>	<b>The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 12 June 2000 at 4.30 p.m. at Ebley Mill.</b>

The meeting ended at 6.24 p.m.