## STROUD DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2000 at 4.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud.

## MEMBERS OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENT:-

Stewart McKane	Katharine Lady Berkeley's	
Cheryl Holley Lee Stopford	Maidenhill Maidenhill	
Lawrence Anderson Dan Snell	Marling Marling	
Lucy Mather	Rednock	
Francesca Lane	Stroud High	
Katy Costigan Nina Costigan	Thomas Keble Thomas Keble	
Also Present:-		
Alan Caig Fred Chance	Head of Leisure, Stroud District Council Stroud Team Leader, Youth and Community Service	
Colin Hassall	Gloucestershire Drugs and Alcohol Action Team Co-ordinator	
David Marshall Lesley Williams	Information Officer, Stroud District Council Chair of Stroud District Council	
Apology:-	Chloe Carpenter (Stroud High)	

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2000	Accepted as a correct record.
<u>To receive reports</u> <u>on:-</u>	
- <u>Transport</u>	<u>Nina Costigan</u> reported that she had contacted Tiina Emsley, a special projects officer with the District Council, who had advised her that work on mapping transport facilities/needs was due to be undertaken this year. The partnership on transport (District, County and Town
	Councils) had discussed the concessionary fare scheme and had felt that efforts should be made to allow both the young and the disabled to benefit from this as well as the elderly.

Nina proposed that the Youth Council might consider inviting representatives of 'bus companies to a meeting to discuss transport facilities.
<u>Stewart McKane</u> explained that, from his research, it appeared that one quarter of households in the county did not have a car but that the County Council had only committed £600,000 this year towards 'bus transport. This equated to £1.50 per person.
There also appeared to be a county and national trend of preference being given to train rather than 'bus transport. The response received by his school to a letter sent to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions had given little information on the regional provision of 'bus transport but a great deal on train facilities. Whilst he agreed that the aim to increase the use of trains was laudable, this county needed a better 'bus system, particularly to support the rural areas.
Referring to the provision of train services for the county, he emphasised that the only stations were at Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud and Cam. In order to use these stations it was still essential to have accessible connecting 'bus services. He understood that discussions were still continuing into the provision of a further station at Charfield but that these did not seem likely to be finalised in the short term.
He gave an example of how difficult it was to plan a journey to Gloucester, particularly for commuters, and how this affected the accessibility for work. He had used the travel helpline and although this had been successful he was unable to obtain details of fares from this source. Contact with the 'bus company itself had proved very unsuccessful.
He also felt that a meeting with representatives of the 'bus companies would be useful, and particularly in the light of the recent report on the safety of school 'buses.
The members discussed various issues including identifying the need for local services, the availability of mini 'bus vehicles other than daytime, the availability of drivers and insurance cover and whether the Rural Transport Policy addressed any of these issues. Stewart commented that the County Action Plan incorporated integrated services but that these would be left to competition and market forces, which he felt did not address adequately local needs.
It was agreed that Nina would contact the 'bus companies to invite them to a meeting of the Youth Council.

- Consultation	Katy Costigan advised that it had not been possible to		
	obtain information in time for this meeting.		
	It was agreed that this matter should be postponed to a future meeting.		
- <u>Young Persons'</u> <u>Rights</u>	As neither of the representatives responsible for this matter had been able to attend this meeting, it was postponed to a future meeting.		
- <u>Facilities and</u> <u>Budgets</u>	Lee Stopford had contacted the Stonehouse Youth Worker and obtained the following information about this particular service:-		
	<ul> <li>the Youth Club provided a base for his work</li> <li>financial resources were insufficient, the budget available only covered the payment of wages for those who worked there</li> <li>payment of bills had to be covered through donations</li> <li>a 'clinic' where young people could discuss any problems would be a way to provide good support</li> <li>there was a lack of activities/sports facilities.</li> </ul>		
	One member suggested that the Painswick Inn Project provided information/counselling/help with obtaining funding.		
	<u>Cheryl Holley</u> commented that the only clubs in the area were those in Gloucester/Cheltenham and these were only open to persons over 16 years of age. She suggested that a local Stroud/Stonehouse club for those under 16 years (and obviously not serving alcohol) should be considered. In her view it would be very popular; other members agreed.		
<u>District Council</u> <u>Themed Grants -</u> <u>Youth</u>	Alan Caig advised the members that the District Council's Resources Committee had agreed that a grant of £3,000 would be given to the Youth Council for the year 2000/01 to allocate as it wished.		
	He suggested that members might wish to consider how the money should be spent at their next meeting.		
<u>Drugs Policy –</u> feedback from	Thomas Keble		
schools	At the last student council meeting, there had been general approval for the policy and particularly that it was now a formal, written one. However, the students had felt that each individual case should still be treated on its merits as well as taking into account that each school would have views which were individual to them.		
	A further meeting would be held the following day for approval by the Head on the same policy basis and in co-		

ordination with the school rules.	
Stroud High	
The student council meeting had generally approved the policy and had strongly expressed the point that excluding students was not acceptable. Although initial exclusion in order to deal with the situation was important and would protect the person involved, fair treatment was paramount.	
Katharine Lady Berkeley's	
Although the school council had yet to consider the policy, the representative and other students he had spoken to informally had felt that it appeared to be a sensible way forward.	
<u>Marling</u>	
An emergency student council meeting had considered the policy and given their support both to the policy itself and to the fact that all secondary schools in Gloucestershire would have the same framework within which to work. One comment had been that it was important for individuals to be treated as such and not just as a statistic.	
A suggestion had also been made that ex-drug users might be asked to talk to students about the consequences of drugs.	
Maidenhill	
The policy was considered acceptable but an important aspect was felt to be the contact with the parents. This needed to be confidential and carefully addressed as some parents might feel that they had to take the full burden of responsibility. Confidentiality was important for the students as well, as without that, they might not seek help when they needed it.	
Colin Hassall noted the points raised and stressed that the policy was based on the treatment of students as individuals and on the avoidance of permanent exclusion.	
He referred to the involvement of an ex-drug addict in the education on drug misuse but felt that, although one individual had undertaken this in the past, it needed a particular type of person to be able to do this successfully and within the school framework.	
He advised that drugs education was being targeted by the Government and would involve society's use of all drugs. It would include the development of a programme for 5 year olds and above which would provide a lifestyle package and a more holistic approach.	

De-criminalisation of drugs/effects of all drugs on society	Most of the members felt that the drug education they had received to date had not given students any more information than they had been able to find out for themselves. Alcohol and smoking were also the more prevalent issues raised. The issues which might have resulted in an individual taking drugs were rarely addressed. One school had had the benefit of a Police Officer giving them advice which had been very successful, but it appeared that, due to financial cutbacks, this service was not as readily available. The school had also addressed the drugs issue through years 7, 8 and 9 and in other mediums, such as drama, which reinforced the message. Colin Hassall commented that only 4 full-time Police Officers were currently employed throughout the County on drugs education and also that, as the emphasis was now to educate children at a younger age, these officers were having to cover primary as well as secondary schools. Some of the members were in favour of de-criminalising cannabis, particularly where it could help treat medical conditions, but wished to retain the current classification for Ecstay. Others felt that to lift the restrictions would only result in more people using the drugs; any drugs were likely to adversely affect users' lives. In relation to alcohol abuse, one member supported more of a limit on alcohol consumption, particularly under-age drinking. It was also suggested that alcoholism was recognised as an illness whereas smoking did not have the same effect and was more likely to be considered less important. Colin Hassall explained the Government's 10 year policy on the reduction of drug misuse and its effects on communities of crime and treatment. The decision not to alter the legislation on drug classification was a direct message that the Government would not be seen to be 'soft' on drug issues or willing to compromise on its policies.
Validate system	Colin Hassall wished to bring the proposed details for
	the age validation system to the Youth Council for their views, which was agreed.

Election of Officers to	The following appointments were agreed:-	
the Youth Council		
	<u>Chair</u>	Nina Costigan
	<u>Vice Chair</u>	Stewart McKane
	Press Officers	Katy Costigan Dan Snell
Presentation to the Stroud District Council Meeting on	Steward McKane and Katy Costigan agreed to lead the presentation.	
20 April 2000	The members discussed the issues which might be included in the presentation and agreed on the work of the Youth Council, the issues already raised (particularly transport) and what the Youth Council would like to take further. The presentation would be for about 15 minutes.	
Future meetings	specifically representativ	eed that the next meeting should be to deal with transport issues, to which ves of transport providers and the County Id be invited.
Other matters of interest	House on 11	invited the members to an event at Roxburgh May 2000 which was titled 'Power' and would re/music etc on that theme.
		ested that the British Youth Council might be rce of information/research on Youth Council ly.
Date of Next Meeting		eting was scheduled for Thursday 18 May p.m. at Ebley Mill.

The meeting ended at 6.08 p.m.

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