

THE SENIOR COUNCIL FOR DEVON

Bideford and District PUBLIC MEETING

Minutes of a meeting held on the 23rd November 2011 Bideford Town Hall at 2.15pm

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:- 25th January 2012

WELCOME:

Alan Rayner (AR) informed that the chairperson (Keith Shaw) could not attend as his wife Trudi is still in hospital following an orthopaedic procedure.

The main speakers for the day were Sam Lythgoe-Jones from Young Devon and Tim Hall the **SCfD Publicity and Development Officer**. Also introduced was Andrea Chick (**SCfD Administrator**) who would be the note taker for the afternoon following the departure of Jackie Gaskin.

YOUNG DEVON (YD)

Sam Lythgoe-Jones (SL) was accompanied by Devon and Tom, two young volunteers with Young Devon. He explained that YD is a charity and that their work includes the National Citizen Service (NCS) for the Government, engagement with the community and confidence building. They have a property on Bideford High Street and would soon be opening a shop there as a promotion of local young peoples' skills. The Young Devon team also run Participation in Action which involved inspection of services, tourist information and health services from a young person's perspective. During the summer they ran an NCS project which involved working in the community and an exhibition day was held in Exmoor National Park. This was built on what life was like in the Second World War and the young people did the research (eg into contemporary games and attitudes to rationing) in the homes of older people.. [Contrasts with formal OPHs!]

Young Devon also had funding to look at the life of the people in Bideford, how they view the town and what role they have played within it. The respondents included young people, the police and some senior Council members - all included in a film which SL would show after concluding his introduction.

SL had met Maggie Durkin (MD) (local portfolio holder on Inter-generational matters) to discuss different ways in which they could work together and the way that the young and the old view each other. It seems that the two age groups face a common difficulty In fully comprehending the other.- some in each group have bad opinions of members of the other group. It was agreed there is a necessity to work together and some ideas for this were a graffiti project, a slogan, barn dance and the young people suggested paint balling – using lasers of course rather than actual paint! The new shop in Bideford would hold skill swapping sessions. Older people have skills that are not being widely used by young people and there are some things with which young people could help the older generations. Examples could include woodworking and sewing skills swapped with IT skills. SL would like to hear from anyone who has some ideas that can keep everyone working together. He then showed the film which was excellent.

AR thanked the YD team for attending and a short Q&A session with SL followed. During that, Margaret Coles (a Board member of SCfD) raised the possibility of Bideford YD and SCfD working together doing films with the young people to put on SCfD website – and contact details were exchanged.

Q. How large is the group?

A. Our group consisted of 15 young people but after working with the NCS over the summer we now have about 35 young people that we see regularly. Maggie Durkin fostered a good relationship between YD and the Bideford SC group. Now YD and the SCfD need to build on that.

Q. Where do you meet?

A. We have got a shop on the High Street (corner Grenville St) which is going to be open soon (possibly February 2012) which has also been the main base. Although Young Devon has been going for decades (1949) the impetus in Bideford has been a little more recent.

Q. What about the Happy Cafe in Westward Ho!?

A. It is mainly seasonal but has similar aims in terms of involving young people. MD has full details of their opening times and visits there are encouraged.

Q. What is the proportion of young people in Bideford?

A. Approximately 3000 – 3,500 so not many are part of our group. Some of them get referred to us as they have misbehaved and the average age is 16. We have a Youth Committee but Young Devon are not the only group for young people in town, there are others.

AR: One of the current challenges is that there are significant numbers not in employment, education or training (NEETs). This is being addressed by organisations in the locality and any suggestions are very welcome – North Devon+ too. Also as per the theme, anything that promotes understanding between the generations and the question is are we prepared to work closely? Yes we would but it comes down to how it will work in practice.

Q. Who made your video?

A. Matt Biggs.

SL: Young Devon have just opened in Newton Abbot where there is a big youth club and a recently opened YD cafe. We also have groups in Ilfracombe, Bideford and Barnstaple. A YES centre has just opened in Barnstaple which gives support for young people re taxes, accommodation etc.

SCfD Introductions

AR introduced Margaret Coles (MC) who is a member of the Holsworthy group and the county-wide SCfD Board – where she is the lead for the publicity of SCfD. MC outlined the work that she carries out for the SCfD – including being the liaison Board member for the Torrington groups.

Graham Bowen (GB) was the Chairman of the Great Torrington branch since it was formed. He reported that the original members were getting rather tired and there were not enough people coming forward to help so the branch is in suspended animation. There are plans to develop and relaunch next year and GB said he wanted to see how things go but, with help from Tim Hall (TH), they will have a recruitment push. There are so many voluntary organisations in Torrington and he wants to encourage people to bring their interests to SCfD too. “Torrington Together” is meeting on 7th December - where all of the local organisations get together and let each other know what is going on. GB said he would look forward to the future and meanwhile have an easier six months.

AR pointed out that the Great Torrington group was instrumental in starting the first SCfD memory cafe in Devon and this work will be continuing. AR said that we owe a debt of gratitude to our Great Torrington friends who have developed the memory cafe over the last few years.

GB reported that the next Memory Cafe is on the 8th December and the children from schools were going to sing carols.

AR then introduced the two members of SCfD staff present. Andrea Chick was with us to take notes.

Tim Hall (TH) joined SCfD in 2009 and has a background in press and journalism. TH introduced himself and gave a quick outline on his talk which was basing his talk on experience over the years and what drives communication. His other strand is group development and he will be assisting both Bideford and Torrington over the coming months.

READING – Barry Evetts

AR then introduced Barry Evetts (BE) who talked about the reading in schools project which is going very well and he thanked the several local SC members who are participating in it. Overall, 28 people completed the initial training. In the second week of September they went into schools which covered the area from Woolsey/Hartland back to Instow. Schools can identify children who need some remedial reading instruction on a one to one basis for a 10 week period. This was going along nicely and subject to getting finance in new year he will be introducing a new reading remedial programme called “Yes, we can read”. A manual designed by ex teachers is available, costing £35, is something that can be used to give one to one instruction for people between the ages of 8 – 80 who need help with reading.

BE is now about to start another project – on adult literacy. BE said that this project was still at the embryonic stage. He hopes to get this project going under a structured scheme called Read Easy later in 2012. More details can be found on the Read Easy UK website: WWW.readeasy.org.uk.

COMMUNICATION – Tim Hall (TH)

AR introduced TH by saying that we need to get communication going so that people do not feel unheard when they have issues that are relevant to SCfD or to Older People in general. SCfD is meant to be about two way communication and if that communication is going only one way then SCfD is not working as well as it should. Thus it is ideal that we are having this session today.

TH's presentation started with a description on the role of the media and how it works in today's society.

TH explained the different but complementary roles of publicity and development, and how good communication underlies both. He said that the purpose of the talk is 1) to foster a better understanding of how communications works in order to get the Senior Council message across and 2) to get each member of the audience thinking about why they are involved with the Senior Council.

TH gave a spoken link to a PowerPoint slide show on 'Communications' (1 picture is worth 1,000 words!) that illustrated how every single person communicates on everything under the sun in a huge variety of ways through life. They always have done, from cave paintings to Twitter and Facebook. The means of communication have changed beyond recognition, from face-to-face stories around the campfire to the internet capable of communicating with billions, but the message is the same: humans talking, gossiping and chattering to each other about their lives.

TH continued by saying that of course, this is also a recipe for a huge amount of confusion and isolation, especially for older people as life gets ever more 'virtual' and digital. The key is somehow to hang on at all costs to the importance of each individual, ensuring that she/he is heard and can share in daily life.

The media always use human stories – the voices and experiences of ordinary people – to personalise the news so that readers, listeners and viewers can relate to what is going on. Charities use 'case histories' all the time to illustrate their causes, and BBC Children in Need on 18th November was packed with them. There is an old saying that 'history walks on two feet' and that is one of the yardsticks a good reporter will use. TH illustrated how reporters build up stories to explain the news, and he included several slides of pages from the North Devon Journal showing how that paper has treated some key SCfD themes.

This slide show was rounded off with what TH has been doing to publicise the Senior Council message, and encouraging individual Senior Council members to speak out on the important issues. The show ended with the words: 'What's the story? Make your voice heard!'.

TH is trying to find out if people still have the impetus and interest to carry on the SCfD presence in Bideford and District after May 2012 when several of the existing committee will be retiring on health grounds. Members were given the following three questions on a piece of paper and asked to answer each of them:

- 1 Why did you join SCfD?
- 2 What do you see as role of your SCfD group?
- 3 What difficulties, if any, have you had in trying to achieve (2)?

TH will draw things together and feed the responses into a paper that the group may wish to use at the January meeting.

Meeting finished at 4.20 pm