

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 17 July 2023

**Title:** Youth Services

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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### Background

The Town Council has £40,000 budgeted towards youth services in the current fiscal year. In recent years this has been dispersed by way of grants to youth organisations providing new services or delivering specific projects in Witney.

1. At the last meeting of this Committee on 12 June, it was resolved that funds were made available from the Youth Services Grant to provide a youth service in Witney during the summer holidays and,
2. That, this be considered at the meeting of Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

### Current Situation

At the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 19 June, it was resolved that up to £10,000 of the budget could be earmarked for potential summer youth services following the closure of Got2B CIC. The actual amount would be determined following a strategic meeting of youth service providers.

The above meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> July and a list of services on offer was compiled and further ideas or suggestions were sought (minutes are attached as **Appendix A**). At the time of writing, a follow-up meeting is planned for 12<sup>th</sup> July and a verbal update will be provided by Officers/Members at this Committee meeting. From the discussion, the West Oxfordshire District Council 'Youth Needs Assessment' report was provided with an accompanying summary of Witney data. These are attached as **Appendices B & C**.

With regard to the remaining amount of the budget, a sum of £2,400 has been earmarked to a forest school training project at Witney Lake & Country Park. Members must decide whether they want the youth grant scheme to run as before, with applications open from 1 August-1 September, or to think more strategically on how to utilise the budget. For example, other parish and town councils have successfully recruited full and part-time youth services staff to provide and deliver an active programme of engagement with the community, to provide better life chances for young people.

The type of support offered could include; assisting with the developing youth council, working with local schools to provide targeted support, supporting children new to Witney from another country, supporting children inside the town with poor mental health and/or low self-esteem, supporting children back into school with behavioural difficulties, supporting parents, holding targeted fun youth events across the town.

If this last option were to be favourable, a fully costed job description, specification and remuneration would need to be considered by the Personnel Sub-Committee.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

By not running the youth grants scheme, some local organisations may struggle to find alternative funding for the forthcoming year. The scheme has been oversubscribed in recent years and although the Council has a discretionary grants scheme, these funds would not cover the amounts usually requested.

By employing a dedicated youth services employee, funds would be paying for a service under the remit of another authority. However, the Council would have a direct opportunity to oversee youth work in the town.

### **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The Youth Services budget is £40,000.
- Up to £10,000 of this has been allocated to summer services (may not all be expended).
- £2,400 has been allocated to a further youth project.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Whether the youth services grants scheme should open on 1<sup>st</sup> August or,
2. Whether the Council should think more strategically about ongoing youth services in the town and employ a dedicated employee to this task.