

**WITNEY SUMMER YOUTH SERVICES MEETING
Witney Town Council**

Held on Thursday, 6 July 2023, 3.30pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair) WTC/WODC

Others:	Councillor R Smith	WTC/WODC
	Councillor L Cherry	WTC
	Councillor K Godwin	Carterton TC
	Heather McCulloch	WODC
	Adam Clapton	WTC
	Polly Inness	WTC
	Iain Bilton	Abingdon & Witney College
	Jason Huffadine	Witney Community Church
	Susann Haehnel	OCC
	Lauren Jacobs	APCAM
	Ali Rice	Witney Community Church
	Nicky Morley	Thames Valley Police
	Helen Murray	Thames Valley Police

WELCOME

The Chair, Cllr J Aitman, welcomed all attendees and advised the meeting had been called as the town council was concerned about young people in the town and support/services in place for them during the summer and beyond.

It was hoped the meeting would confirm what was available, whether it be detached youth work or other activities, and ascertain where the local authorities could assist.

INTRODUCTIONS

Short introductions from attendees were given.

YOUTH SERVICES – SUMMER & BEYOND

Attendees were advised the PCSOs had been into schools, speaking to year 5 and 6 students, and sporting activities during the summer seemed to be preferred over traditional youth group meetups. Others noted that many young people had grown up not knowing what a youth club was and there were different issues for differing ages of young people. Boredom was a likely factor in 11–15-year-olds which then could lead to ASB in some older teens.

In response to a question, it was confirmed the purpose of the meeting was to gather information on what was available and identify where gaps might be, if any. The departure of Got2B CIC as a detached youth worker service had been a real loss to the community and it was difficult to assess this impact would have. Young people were referred to them, but they also went out and got to know the young people through formal and informal means, particularly at The Leys. During previous summers they had held various activities so young people knew where to go for support.

Updates on activities, events and youth work being offered were provided by Witney Community Church, APCAM and West Oxfordshire District Council, the latter including the HAF and You Move programmes, but there was still concern that individuals who needed support the most were being missed and wouldn't access the established and formal activities on offer. An attendee suggested there was not enough being done to engage with young people on the internet. Social Media was where they communicated after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

A representative from OCC advised they ran a targeted youth support service and there was a specific offer in West Oxfordshire. There could be some work over the summer but there were only two youth workers and there was annual leave in the team across the summer. They could offer support alongside other partners and were happy to do some transition work with Got2B, but they needed to know what else was needed and being offered.

A representative from WODC advised they had an overview of community services across the District but there was no dedicated young person resource. There had been a massive impact on the young after Covid, along with cuts and under investment in vital infrastructure. There were positive contributors which were small scale, disconnected and only working in certain areas. A long-term solution was needed from a weak starting point to avoid a further lost generation. Everyone in the meeting was motivated to find a solution and there was a responsibility to act and be adventurous with ideas. WODC had carried out a Youth Needs Assessment – 3,000 young people had engaged, with about 1,000 of those in Witney. The documentation was being analysed to see what could be done. Some work had already taken place with the Witney data which could be shared.

All agreed a proactive, strategic approach was needed for a long-term solution and the evidence from the Youth Needs Assessment would help with that aim. In the meantime, an information gathering exercise was required to bring together the current offers mentioned at the meeting, along with ideas and suggestions for other services. This should include all of the items discussed, including additional leisure centre use, potential meetings on Church Green after school, and offers to help publicise and fund additional activities.

A central repository would be needed and arranged by Witney Town Council and the findings could be discussed in a follow-up meeting.

Cllr Aitman thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for providing information and ideas.

Actions:

Summer 2023

- Compilation of an activity/events programme showing what is available this summer. This should also include ideas and suggestions for other services. It would help everyone decide what was achievable and to see where gaps were.
- Dissemination & publication of the above.

Beyond Summer 2023

- A Strategic plan. A pro-active not reactive, co-ordinated approach by all.

The meeting closed at: 4.50 pm
