

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 3 June 2024

**Title:** Witney Youth Council

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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### Background

The Council agreed to reform a Witney Youth Council in June 2023 and under the terms of reference of the convened Youth Services task and finish group, this should have been in place to commence by 31 March 2024. The following mission statement was agreed by the task and finish group,

*Witney Town Council supports and empowers young people in Witney to be more involved in making decisions about issues and services that affect them in their futures. A Witney Youth Council gives children and young people a 'collective voice' that is listened to and helps influence actions by decision makers.*

Following initial feedback from young people on the scheme it was noted that the key themes on what young people wanted to achieve from a Youth Council was making their own decisions and bringing these to fruition, 'Bring about change and make things happen'. Therefore, initial objectives of the Youth Council were set as:

- To develop projects which represent young people
- Create and spaces for young people
- Create learning opportunities for young people

There will be an opportunity for these to be built upon once the Youth Council had been established and Members are settled into roles.

At the last meeting of the Youth Council task and finish group, held on 15 January 2024, agreement on applications, membership and basic terms were resolved and,

1. That, the governance of the Youth Council be agreed
2. That, Officers produce a recruitment video for with the Core Membership group
3. That, recruitment should commence in early March 2024 and close 20 March.

The membership of the Youth Council was agreed for those aged 11-18 years old with a core membership of 8 members from schools and 9 selected from others affiliated to Witney groups and organisations.

## Current Situation

Due to other officer tasks and commitments, it was not possible to complete the set-up in line with the original time frame. Therefore, the following documents are completed in draft and appended to this report for consideration. As draft documents, they are restricted at this point.

- Youth Council - Terms of Reference
- Youth Council – Conduct of Members
- Recruitment Poster
- Information Pack

A recruitment video has also been created and is viewable here:

<https://www.canva.com/design/DAF77AWDvxA/t6u-hYhMKJzfzNSp4NLfMQ/watch> (please do not share until comms are issued).

The Council's safeguarding policy is currently under review and will be completed before September. The Council will also be DBS checking Youth Council mentors and officers who will be working with Youth Council members. An application form also needs to be created.

The terms of reference and conduct of members documents set out the general governance of the Witney Youth Council, based on the previous recommendations of the Youth Council task and finish group and Council Standing Orders.

There may be concern that these are too prescriptive, but there need to be rules and the actual remit and objectives of the Youth Council are still open for discussion once it is established.

One notable difference in the terms is the number of Councillors, which is now proposed at 20 (to incorporate core school membership from Springfield School) and 10 from members affiliated to any other Witney group or organisation. Witney Parish has shown enthusiasm and has some potential candidates.

School or Organisation	Representatives
<b>Core Membership</b>	
Henry Box School	3
Wood Green School	3
The King School	2
Springfield School	2
	<b>10</b>
<b>Invited Membership Nominations</b>	
Abingdon & Witney College	
Springfield School	
2120 Squadron (Witney) RAF Air Cadets	
Oxfordshire ACF Somme Company	
Bright Futures	
Synolos	
Ice Centre	
Witney Pride	
Church Groups	
Young Rotary	
Yellow Submarine	
Witney & District Football League/Witney & District FA (Sports rep?)	

Witney Parish	
	<b><u>10</u></b>

### Updated proposed Youth Council timeline

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| • General Election (pre-election period until then) | Thursday 4 July           |
| • Launch Youth Council for September                | Monday 8 July             |
| • Schools Close for Summer Holidays                 | Approx. Wednesday 24 July |
| • Nominations close for Youth Council               | Sunday 15 September       |
| • Interviews for prospective members with Mentors   | w/c 23 September 2024     |

The timeline presents realistic dates in order to hold the first meeting in October 2024.

A further meeting of the task and finish group would have been beneficial but to meet these deadlines, a recommendation on how to proceed by the Council is required and any changes can be delegated to the t & f group and/or officers.

### **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.

### **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Benefits provided by the above items are:

- Social cohesion and promoting equality
- Creating a feeling of civic and community pride in Witney
- Creating safe, social, and engaging spaces for all young people
- help to shape change and make an impact on our communities and have a voice on how money is spent within the local community ensuring young people have a voice as part of the decision process
- Provide leadership skills to the next generation – developing the young people of Witney.

### **Financial implications**

- Officer time.
- A budget exists for Youth Council training once members are elected.
- A budget of £500 is held for Youth Council fundraising events.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. The terms of reference for the Witney Town Council Youth Council
2. The recruitment information/documentation and video
3. The above timeline for implementation of the Youth Council
4. Whether a further Youth Council task and finish group is required before September
5. To delegate any final changes to either the task and finish group or officers, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council/Chair of this Committee.