

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 3 June 2024

Title: Youth Services

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

This report is to provide Members of the Committee with an update on Youth Services funded by the Town Council and how to progress previous resolutions on engagement during the spring and summer.

Current Situation

The Station

Officers met with the Project Lead on 16th May per the SLA agreement with Bright Futures Oxfordshire. A quarterly update provided for the meeting is attached to this report for information.

Several detached sessions had taken place and they had engaged with 15+ people in a session during the previous week. Recruiting was still underway and there had been interest from 10-12 people on voluntary and paid roles. Further youth work and safeguarding training would be undertaken; the 'Kick' project would start at Witney ATP for the last week in July and whole of August – this had been advertised in Henry Box and Wood Green and further communications would follow (including from the Town Council). These sessions would be held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The group had been asked to consider other activities for Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Youth Services Forum

The Forum met on 29 May 2024 to introduce The Station and to ascertain the current position with various groups/organisations and what they may have planned for the summer.

The Station provided an update of what they had been doing and what was planned for the summer, including the KICK event at the ATP for the period of the summer holidays.

Detached Youth work was currently taking place between 4-6.30pm and centring on The Leys, ATP and Buttercross area, locations identified in discussions at this forum last year. Madley Park was also noted as having a need.

Oxfordshire County Council advised there was currently no targeted group youth work in Witney, but odd day events were being explored – for example craft events. Their event earlier in the year on Church Green attracted approx. 10 young people. Planned one-to-one OCC youth work was still taking place and the holiday activity programme and free places scheme would run again as last summer.

West Oxfordshire District Council advised they were still recruiting for a Youth Development Officer. This postholder would stimulate the environment in the area for young people and explore provision and need, not least from the outcome of the WODC Youth Needs Assessment results. Funding was

available to youth groups via West Hive – this was made up of general WODC funding and the Shared Prosperity Fund towards capital projects.

There was headway being made at the Leisure Centres, who would be providing a summer activity offering nearer the time as well as Leisure Cards. There were further ‘Your Move’ and ‘Move Together’ opportunities for groups.

Home Start provided an update on their services and were planning to attend several events over the summer. They would also be hosting a Play in the Park session in August.

Concerns were raised about a lack of a Youth Services Hub, although a group of schools was discussing this issue, and regarding absent exam takers and youth experience opportunities. Where would these young people be left in the future?

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Witney Youth Council had been subject to delays but would hopefully be up and running in September/October this year.

A further meeting was tentatively scheduled for the beginning of July to finalise a summer holiday activity list to be published at that time. In the meantime, officers would contact the Witney Forum regarding summer activities and start producing this list as previously resolved by the Council.

Youth Services Budget 2024/25

£30,000 of this amount is earmarked for the expected continuation of the Bright Futures Service.

In 2023/24, the Council provided funds from this budget to APCAM for summer health and wellbeing sessions in the Corn Exchange, to Nature Now for forest school training and to Home Start Oxford as continued financial support. A decision on how the remaining funds will be dispersed in this year will need to be made at the July meeting.

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.

The Council must balance the needs for youth service in Witney against the agreed budgets it has set for the new fiscal year.

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:

- There is a sustainable social value attributed to the services provided by Bright Futures Oxfordshire.
- There are benefits to Witney’s community - young, disadvantaged and vulnerable people by offered by the Bright Futures Service and by compiling a list of accessible activities during the summer.

Financial implications

- The remaining budget for Youth Services in 2024/25

Recommendations

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

1. The update regarding The Station detached Youth Services and,
2. The update from the Witney Youth Forum meeting held on 29 May 2024.