

---

**Agenda Item:** Youth Services Grant 2025-26

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 24 March 2025

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

---

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Youth Services being funded by the Town Council and on how additional funding in the new fiscal year should be dispersed.

### **Background**

#### Youth Services Grant

During the budget-setting process, the Council agreed to re-establish a Youth Services Grant for 2025-26.

The purpose of the fund, when last opened to applications in 2022-23, was for *'community and voluntary sector organisations, including existing organisations and those in the process of setting up to establish easily signposted and accessible youth opportunities, supporting open access to preventative services, particularly for those who may be hard to reach and to extend activities to support the young people of Witney.*

*Activities could include, for example, providing guidance and support about their lives and issues relating to school, family life and peers through way of drop-in sessions.*

*Applications could, for example, facilitate the provision of a safe space for young people who would otherwise have nowhere to go, including a safe space to talk, and the ability to enjoy some self-directed or group/organised discretionary activities. In this instance funds could be requested towards facility hire costs and towards a permanent youth structure in the town.'*

The criteria for the scheme, which ran successfully for 3 years, are attached as **Appendix A**.

#### APCAM

During the previous two summer holidays, APCAM have run weekly mental health drop-in sessions for young people and their families in the Corn Exchange, funded by the town council. The Council funded this in response to a gap in services while schools were closed.

### **Current Situation**

The youth services budgets for 2025-26 were increased as their provision remains a key objective of the Council.

In 2025-26, the Council has separate budget lines for the following so they are ringfenced and do not require funding from the Youth Services Grant.

- Home-Start Oxford £11,000 (4173/408)
- The Station £18,000 (4172/408)

### Youth Services Grant

Members are asked if they would like to consider any changes to the attached criteria for this grant or in the way it is awarded for the current fiscal year.

It is anticipated applications will open at the beginning of the summer, so any further reports will need to be presented to the next committee meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025.

### APCAM

Correspondence has been received from APCAM regarding running drop-in sessions again this summer (and throughout the year) which is attached as **Appendix B**. Also included is information WeGame Sessions they are running which is covered as a separate item in the Community Engagement Report.

### The Station (Detached Youth)

A report outlining the work of the group in the last 12 months, **Appendix C (To Follow)**. The Station also held a Youth Café (BREAK) in the 1863 Café Bar at the Corn Exchange during the February half-term holidays as a trial.

The Town Council has the General Power of Competence which permits it to fund these groups and services.

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Access to well-funded, quality services can help mitigate the effects of social inequality. Ensuring that resources are directed toward the communities and individuals who need them most is a crucial step toward improving outcomes for young people, fostering social mobility, and promoting a more just and equal society.
- b) Biodiversity – none.
- c) Crime & Disorder –By offering young people the tools, opportunities, and support they need to thrive, youth services reduce the likelihood that they will engage in criminal behaviour, contribute to social disorder, or face long-term negative outcomes. These services not only benefit individuals but also promote the well-being and safety of entire communities.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – none.

## **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.

- There is no direct risk, although funding for the provision of additional youth services is a significant part of the Town Council's budget which may be viewed negatively.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Investment in youth services can reduce the risk of negative outcomes, such as involvement in crime, substance abuse, or mental health crises. By offering structured activities and support systems, these programs help prevent young people from falling into harmful behaviours and provide alternatives to risky or destructive paths.

Funding youth services is a critical investment in the future of individuals and communities. It creates long-term social value by addressing the needs of young people, promoting positive development, reducing social inequalities, and fostering a more resilient and cohesive society. The benefits are far-reaching, influencing everything from personal well-being and mental health to economic stability and societal growth.

## **Financial implications**

- The budget for the Youth Services Grant in 2025-26 is £20,000 (4169/408).
- The costs for the APCAM offers are on the attached appendix. There is no budget for either set of sessions. If Members are favourable, this would need to be covered from the Youth Services Grant budget or other budget line.

## **Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report and

- Consider whether the previous criteria are suitable for the 2025-26 Youth Services Grant Scheme, and if not, what Members would like amended,
- Consider whether to fund the APCAM drop-in sessions (and We Game Sessions if applicable) and if favourable, agree where these should be funded from and,
- Note the report of The Station.