
Agenda Item: Youth Services

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 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 in 2025/26 and to consider any amendments for the 2026/27 budget.

Background

Youth Services Grant

In 2025, the Council re-introduced a youth services grant scheme with a budget of £20,000 under the oversight of this Committee, with all grant awards decided on by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Members will recall that the scheme funded eight organisations from this budget, with a further three supported from the discretionary grants fund, demonstrating both a clear need and a willingness from local groups to expand their provision. Awarded amounts differed from those requested and were allocated based on how well applications met the established criteria.

Officers understand that it is the Committee's intention for this scheme to continue in the forthcoming fiscal year.

Other Youth Services

In addition, the Council continued to fund The Station Detached Youth Service (£18,000), which presented its plans for the new year to the previous meeting. These plans were approved, subject to a revised Service Level Agreement (Minute No. SC 531 refers).

Home-Start Oxford requested £12,000 in 2025 from a budget of £11,000, with the full £11,000 awarded. A letter of thanks from September is included as **Appendix A**.

The Council also supported APCAM mental health drop-in sessions and We Game activities at the Corn Exchange throughout the year, at a total cost of £3,600. Feedback on these sessions is still awaited.

Members are invited to consider the continuation of these services and make recommendations accordingly.

Current Situation

Based on the above, the following budgets are proposed for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Witney Youth Services Grant Fund	£20,000
The Station Detached Youth Service	£28,500
Home Start Oxford	£12,000
APCAM (School Holiday Drop-in Sessions)	£ 2,800*
APCAM We Game Sessions	£ 1,200*
 Total of Direct Youth Services funding	 <u>£64,500</u>

*Based on an increase from the 2025/26 figures

Members should note that additional services for young people are provided by the Town Council through other initiatives, including the annual Advent Fayre and OPA Play Day.

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 – no direct impact from the contents of this report.
- 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 – no direct impact from the contents of this report.

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.

- Town and Parish Councils have no statutory duty to provide youth services. There is a reputational risk residents will see further funding as additional taxation. This needs to be balanced against the social value to the community.
- These are large sums of money, so it is critical that funding is allocated strategically, managed with transparency, and coupled with ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure the services provided are effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

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 full implications can be seen in the contents of the report.
- The Council retains separate budget lines for the Youth Services Grant (4169/408), Detached Youth Service (4172/408), and Home-Start Oxford (4173/408).
- If the Committee were to recommend further APCAM sessions in the new year this would need to be requested to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee as to where this may be funded from.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and recommend to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee,

1. The level of Town Council spending on Youth Services in 2026/27, including:
 - Retaining a budget Ring-fencing £28,500 and £12,000 for The Station Detached Youth Project and Home Start Oxford respectively.
 - Whether the Council should budget for further APCAM mental health drop-in sessions throughout the year, or during school holidays, or at all.
2. To note the Council has the General Power of Competence which allows it to fund for the above.