

**Agenda Item:** Youth Council Update**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026**Contact Officer:** Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Witney Youth Council.

## Background

The Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Witney Carnival.

The primary purpose of the Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that is heard by decision makers. By giving young people a voice, the Witney Youth Council plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive and responsive local government, encouraging active participation, and developing key skills among Witney's young people.

## Current Situation

### Youth Council Meeting Frequency - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Holding the last three Youth Council meetings monthly rather than every other month helped maintain motivation and move planning forward, although attendance remained about the same. The next few meetings will return to a bi-monthly schedule to allow Officers time to plan upcoming Witney Town Council events, with the option to increase the frequency again if requested by youth councillors.

### End-of-Meeting Discussions

At the last meeting on 8 January 2025, officers introduced an informal post-meeting discussion, where youth councillors sat around a smaller table and talked more casually after going through the agenda. This proved very effective in encouraging them to reflect on what had been discussed and to plan their next steps. When time allows, Officers will continue to encourage this approach at future Youth Council meetings.

### A Taste of Witney – Witney Youth Council Event

Witney Youth Councillors decided to host an event for young people after noting a lack of activities in Witney, and they were keen to celebrate different cultures through food. Rather than cooking themselves, they plan to invite local restaurants to provide food samples, with the restaurants managing food safety while the Youth Council provides the venue, support,

and oversees attendance. The ticketed event will take place at the Corn Exchange, with funds raised contributing to the planned water re-filling station at The Leys. Restaurants will be contacted by youth councillors by the end of January.

## **House of Commons Visit**

Witney Youth Council has shown a strong interest in both local and national politics and has frequently requested a visit to the House of Commons. MP Charlie Maynard has offered to provide a guided tour; however, a specific date is still in the process of being arranged with his team.

## **Youth Council Elected Roles**

Witney Youth Council re-elected roles for:

- Chair/Vice Chair
- Media Officer
- Treasurer

Three of the four roles were re-elected to different youth councillors, allowing them to develop new skills through taking on new responsibilities.

## **Daily Slides and End of Term Newsletters**

Updates from Witney Youth Council and Witney Town Council concerning young residents are continuing to be shared with local secondary schools for inclusion in their newsletters.

## **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 – Witney Youth Council inherently tackles inequality by giving a voice and a platform to young people, often apart of diverse communities. Many issues youth councillors want to tackle involve discrimination.
- b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to help Witney's green spaces have not yet been discussed.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Helping young people feel listened to through avenues such as a Youth Council can help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime by Young People through promoting mental health awareness, peer-led activities/initiatives, and improving the reputation of young people in Witney.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency –When Witney Youth Council buy items for their projects, officers have prioritised sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

## **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.

- Organisations and local groups able to gather valuable insights on the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and that their voice can make an impact.

## **Financial implications**

- Officers' working time
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for the Youth Council meetings.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Consider the Youth Council update.