
Agenda Item: Youth Council Update

Meeting Date: Monday, 15 June 2026

Contact Officer: Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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 an important 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 Attendance and Recruitment

The Youth Council continues to benefit from a core group of four Youth Councillors who regularly attend meetings and contribute to discussions and projects. To ensure all places remain active and engaged, those who have not attended or responded for three consecutive meetings are being contacted to confirm whether they wish to continue their involvement.

Recruitment will be a key focus over the coming months, with efforts underway to welcome new young people to the Youth Council. Current Youth Councillors have agreed to help promote the opportunity within their schools and encourage their peers to apply, alongside support from the Town Council through social media promotion.

Interest in joining remains positive, with an interview for a prospective new Youth Councillor scheduled to take place in June.

A Taste of Witney – Witney Youth Council Event

Witney Youth Councillors at the start of this year decided to host an event for young people in response to a lack of activities in Witney, with the aim of celebrating different cultures through food.

With only two restaurants expressing interest and many youth councillors busy with upcoming exams, the event could not go forward. Youth Councillors are instead focusing on joining the town council at the Witney Carnival with a smaller activity to engage with other young people.

The Youth Council, along with officers also attended The Station's BREAK event at The Leys during May half-term to promote the group and seek further engagement.

Witney Youth Council's "Politics and Pizza"

Members of the Youth Council have expressed a strong interest in creating more opportunities to discuss politics and current issues with other young people in the community. Following the success of Oxfordshire County Council's recent Pizza and Politics event at the Corn Exchange, there is clear evidence that young residents are looking to have a dedicated space to share their views, ask questions, and engage in political discussion.

The Youth Council currently has access to a £500 budget, along with subsidised use of the Corn Exchange Hall, which could support the planning and delivery of a similar event. Development of the project could be explored over the coming Youth Council meetings, allowing members to shape the structure and content of the event.

National Youth Council UK

Following the Witney Youth Council voting in favour of joining the National Youth Council, a membership has now been purchased, and upcoming opportunities will begin to be communicated in Youth Council meetings.

Witney and District Museum Youth Council Tour

A representative from the Witney and District Museum, who leads a range of walking tours around Witney, kindly offered to host a tour for the Youth Council. Unfortunately, the date initially proposed was unsuitable for most attendees.

With a busy summer schedule ahead, the representative has agreed to postpone the tour and revisit plans at a later date. She will look to offer alternative dates in the future that may be more convenient for a greater number of young people from the Youth Council to take part.

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 and daily slides.

Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the upcoming Youth Council meetings are as follows:

- Tuesday 23 June 2026 – 4PM to 5PM (Informal Meeting)

- Thursday 9 July 2026 – 4PM to 5PM

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

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.