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**Agenda Item:** Youth Services & Grant Applications

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on current youth service initiatives, provide details of the applications received through the Town Council's grant scheme, and invite comments from the Committee before recommendations are finalised.

### **Background**

#### Bright Futures (The Station) Service Level Agreement

Members will recall the Council agreed to negotiate a new SLA with Bright Futures Oxon towards a detached youth service for Witney. The drafted SLA was agreed by the Council by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 30 March 2026 (minute no. F172 refers).

#### Youth Services Grant Applications 2026

The Council's Youth Services Grant scheme for 2026 opened for applications between 8 May 2026 – 7 June 2026. Grants will be allocated from a budget of £20,000 set for this scheme. For reference, the purpose of the fund is as follows:

*'The Youth Fund is open to applications from 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 may 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 may, 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 are attached as **Appendix A**.

## Current Situation

Sixteen applications for the fund were received, totalling £58,537.36. These are outlined below with the requested amounts.

Organisation Name	Registered Charity? Y/N	Funding Purpose	Amount of Grant Applied For
Assisted Reading for Children (ARCh)	Yes	We are asking WTC Youth Services Grant to support the school's contribution towards the ARCh service for 10 Witney schools (10 x £555). We provide vetted, trained, resourced and supported reading helper volunteers to primary schools across the Witney area.	£5,550
Aspire	Yes	Our tuition service offers small group sessions in a trusted and familiar setting. In light of increasing demand, we are seeking to expand our English and Maths tuition offer in 2026. We would like to deliver a higher number of tuition sessions this year (an additional 85 hours of English and Maths tuition), so that we can meet the increasing demand.	£2,500
Be Free Young Carers	Yes	We are applying for funding specifically for our 13+ Youth Groups and our new 8 - 12 Youth Groups. Funding will cover the cost of the hired spaces for the venues along with the cost of food at each of these sessions which will allow 20 - 30 young carers to have food during the youth club. In addition funding covers the staff costs to deliver these sessions.	£3,500
Benefice of Witney - Youth Café	Yes	Witney's Youth Café is a weekly open access provision for young people aged 12–18 in Witney, offering a safe, welcoming, and inclusive third space after school. This grant will provide the stability needed to grow the project, strengthen partnerships, and secure long term funding for a dedicated Youth Chaplain role. (52 weeks of staffing, volunteer support, snacks & drinks, equipment, and contingency)	£10,877.36
Clear Sky Children's Charity	Yes	We are seeking funding to run 2 Heart to Heart groups in the Witney community. Heart to Heart is a group programme for children, teens and their parents/carers to attend together across the age ranges of 5 – 9 years and 10 – 15 years. Each group will support up to 8 young person/adult pairs. Heart to Heart offers structured activities, evidence-based parenting support, and opportunities for peer connection.	£4,460
Courtside	No	A targeted approach to visit up to 14 schools in year 1 (predominantly Key Stage 2 primary age children) as a first step in community engagement, delivering free pickleball and physical activity to 3,000-4,000 children per annum within the parish of Witney. Also, to deliver a series of free activity festivals throughout the year as a follow-on offer; pupils invited to attend masterclasses with ex-pros, fun inflatables and free/inclusive tennis, padel and pickleball provision.	£2,000

Ducklington Sports Club	Yes	The grant of £2,000 is requested to fund the purchase of new match footballs and first aid kits for all 14 teams ahead of the 2026/27 season.	£2,000
Hope After Harm	Yes	The grant is required to support Hope After Harm's Young People's Programme in Witney. The programme provides trauma-informed mentoring for young people who are facing significant challenges, including trauma, exclusion or risk of exclusion, conflict, poor wellbeing, low confidence, family difficulties, bullying, discrimination, risk-taking behaviour or contact with the criminal justice system.	£1,000
1st North Leigh Guides	Yes	To fund a sailing session for the girls at the Oxford Sailing Club at Farmoor reservoir.	£500
Bright Futures Oxfordshire (The Station)	Yes	The grant would cover six months' employment at eight hours per week, for a Project Coordinator, to begin to make a youth cafe in Witney a reality. The role would include gathering and facilitating youth voice, investigating options for premises, producing a feasibility and sustainability study, networking with stakeholders and investigating funding options.	£3,500
Witney Buttercross Scout Group	Yes	This grant is requested to fund essential infrastructural and environmental improvements at our newly approved 6.5-acre campsite and outdoor activity hub, 'The Old Oak' in North Leigh.	£7,000
West Oxfordshire Levellers RL	No	Building on our successful inaugural Girls Skills Day on International Women's Day 2026 (supported by Witney Town Council), West Oxfordshire Levellers RL aim to hold a second Girls Rugby League Activity Day for school years 2 to 11 with separate groups for younger and older ages.	£1,000
Witney Mills Cricket Club	No	The grant would be used to purchase a new mobile batting cage. We use the mobile batting cage to allow for multiple junior age groups (and our senior players) to train whilst ensuring the safety of others on the ground – it is an essential tool that we used multiple times per week.	£1,700
Witney Basketball Club	No	To purchase a second set of basketball kit for juniors and adults that will act as an away kit to the one we already have. Three sets of kit will be required and we invite Witney Town Council to be involved in the design process if they'd like to be where a local landmark or reference could be included.	£3,500
Yellow Submarine	Yes	We will be organising nearly £2000-worth of activities, for groups of 12-16 young people over summer. These costs are only for the activities and do not include staffing, volunteer or overheads costs, which are funded from elsewhere.	£2,000

Yes Futures	Yes	Yes Futures requests a £7,500 grant to deliver the Witney Inside Track & Action Project in 2026/2027. The sessions are: Graphic Typography (visual design geometry/calligraphy), Courtroom Clash (legal logic and formal debate), AI App Generation (prompt engineering and screen-based software design), and The Startup Blueprint (business plan development). - four premium skills workshops for the wider community of young people, a profound and intensive 1:1 intervention for 18 hard-to-reach teenagers	£7,500
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In addition, the Council also received an application from Home Start Oxford for the sum of £12,000. A budget for 2026 is earmarked for Home Start to provide early intervention services in Witney (see financial implications).

Full applications are attached as appendices to this report and provide comprehensive details of each request.

On 23 March 2026 (Minute No. SC152), this Committee resolved to delegate the assessment of applications and the formulation of funding recommendations to the Deputy Town Clerk, the Chair of this Committee, the Leader, and the Deputy Leader, as was the case in 2025. The recommendations of this evaluation panel will then be submitted to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, which is responsible for making the final decisions on awards.

Notwithstanding this delegation, this Committee may wish to provide comments or guidance on any of the applications at this stage, particularly where members consider that additional information or clarification is required.

## 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 – Dispersal can help ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds, including those from marginalized, low-income, or underserved communities, have equal access to safe spaces, recreational activities, educational support, and social opportunities.
- b) Biodiversity – Awardees should encourage nature-based activities and environmentally sustainable development.
- c) Crime & Disorder - Well-designed youth services offer safe, structured environments that engage young people in positive activities, reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour, vandalism, or crime. These services can also address underlying causes of offending—such as social exclusion, lack of opportunities, or poor mental health.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Applications such as for outdoor education, active travel can have a positive impact by promoting low-carbon behaviours and engaging young people in environmental matters.

## **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.

Given the number of applications and the total amount requested through the scheme, Members should ensure they are confident in three key areas: the demonstrated need for the service, the applicant's capacity to deliver it effectively, and the clear community benefit to young people in Witney. These considerations, along with others, are outlined in the grant criteria for reference.

## **Social Value**

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

Providing grants to enhance or introduce new services for young people generates significant social value by fostering stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities. These services help young people build confidence, skills, and resilience, improving their future prospects in education, and employment. They create safe spaces for social interaction, reduce isolation, and promote mental and physical well-being.

Investing in youth also supports early intervention and prevention, potentially reducing future demand on public services. Moreover, such grants can promote equality by reaching underserved or at-risk groups, ensuring all young people have opportunities to thrive in Witney.

## **Financial implications**

- The Bright Futures SLA has terms agreed with the Council via budget-setting for funding up to £28,500 in the current fiscal year.
- A budget of £20k has been agreed and budgeted for within this fiscal year for the purpose of this grant scheme.
- A budget of £12,000 is held under budget code 4173/408 for Home Start Oxford.
- There is no additional budget over and above the amount already set.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report:

1. And also note the signing of the agreed Service Level Agreement with Bright Futures Oxon towards a detached youth service in Witney, The Station.
2. Consider whether further information or clarification on any matter is required from Youth Services Grant applicants.
3. Consider whether any comments and/or direction should be provided to the agreed evaluation panel, ahead of their final recommendation of awards to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, including Home Start Oxford.