STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item:	Youth Council Update
Meeting Date:	Monday, 16 November 2026
Contact Officer:	Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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

Background

Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the Youth Council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and Witney Carnival, given feedback on Town Council projects and services, and encouraged to use their voice in local government.

The primary purpose of Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that can be heard by decision makers. In doing so, Witney Youth Council supports more inclusive and responsive local government, encourages active participation, and helps develop key skills among young people in Witney.

Current Situation

A Slice of Politics

The Witney Youth Council event, A Slice of Politics, has been postponed to February Half-term after the coinciding of the next Oxfordshire County Council Pizza & Politics event. This decision was made with the Youth Council Chair and Town Council Officers, to avoid confusion between the events and to ensure maximum attendance.

Youth Councillors have many ideas of promotion options, features and activities during the event, including usage of the screen and background music, which this additional preparation time will allow for full attention to.

Meeting Attendance

Witney Youth Council currently have a core group of 9 members; however many meetings see apologies of typically around 6 members (selection varies). This means many meetings are unable to meet quorum.

In order to improve this, the Chair suggested that after 3 attendances of a youth council event (or support of WTC event), the member can receive a Witney Youth Council-branded baseball cap and a certificate confirming their membership.

Business Name	Business 1	Business 2	Business 3
Product Photo			
Price for 6 hats embroidered	£72 (£12 each)	£46.92 (£7.82 each)	£41.94 (£6.99 each)
Price for 6 hats printed	£72 (£12 each)	£28.92 (£4.82 each)	£36.94 (£6.16 each)

Councillors are invited to advise on the idea, and if approved, what business and type of customisation they feel is best for the cost.

The previous Treasurer had to step down from the youth council due to increased volunteering commitments. Officers asked for any feedback, and he said he truly enjoyed his time at the youth council, however perhaps more regular dates of meetings may be easier for members to keep track of. This improvement of consistent meeting dates was implemented in August.

Agendas Posted to Social Media

To encourage more applications, social media posts of the upcoming meeting agendas are now being posted ahead of each meeting to promote the Witney Youth Council.



Figure 1 Screenshot of the post in October

Remembrance Attendance

Witney Youth Councillors laid a wreath during the annual Remembrance Service. This is always a special opportunity for them and it's great to see them representing the young people of Witney.

Annual Youth Council Meeting

The October Youth Council meeting saw the Chair staying the same and the media officer and treasurer changing. This was then confirmed in the November meeting.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Youth Council Chair requested more consistent meeting dates to better fit members' schedules. Following discussion and a vote at the August Youth Council meeting, meetings will now take place on either the first or second Thursday of each month. The upcoming Youth Council meeting dates are as follows:

- Thursday 3 December 2026 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 14 January 2027 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 11 February 2027 - 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 supports equality by giving a voice and platform to young people, including those from diverse communities. Many of the issues Youth Councillors wish to address involve discrimination.
b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to support 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 among young people by promoting mental health awareness, supporting peer-led activities and initiatives, and improving perceptions of young people in Witney.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency – When Witney Youth Council purchases items for its projects, officers prioritise 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 mitigate 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 are able to gather valuable insights into the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and understand that their voices can have an impact.

Financial implications

- Officer working time.
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for Youth Council meetings and events, including the proposed “Politics and Pizza”/“A Slice of Politics” event. This is intended to be funded from the Youth Council budget line 4103/408.

Recommendations

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

1. That, the report be considered and noted.