

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 30 May 2022

**Title:** Youth Services Grant Review

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk - Adam Clapton

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### **Background**

The Town Council's £30,000 Youth Services Grant was established in 2020 following meetings of a Youth Forum, made up of local stakeholders, and subsequent recommendations of the Youth Services Working Party. Gaps were identified in local provision following cuts in the dedicated outreach services run by the County Council.

The purpose of the funding 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.*

The Grant scheme has run successfully for two years, with funds being expended in full to two organisations in 2020, and four in 2021.

### **Current Situation**

The grant fund was oversubscribed by requests for youth services/projects in 2021-22 and all applications were only partly met. Therefore, the budget for 2022-23 was increased to £40,000.

### Resident's Satisfaction Survey 2022

At the request of this committee, question 4 asked residents which of three priorities they would like to see further investment in by the Town Council; Youth Services was the most popular from those who responded, so members should take into consideration the appendix for that agenda item in their decision making. The Committee may also like to consider an

increasing number of comments regarding services for the over 50's and elderly as a separate project.

The results indicate a need for further projects/activities for youngsters (although only a small percentage of respondents fell into lower age ranges). Two organisations have been awarded the larger amount of funds in the previous two years and the Council should be mindful that local services don't become reliant on this funding and that new activities are considered.

With this in mind, and an increase of budget, members may like to review the purpose of the Youth Services Grant and whether the whole amount should be considered for running costs, projects or partly given over to another option. Through attendance at the Witney Forum meetings, officers are aware that youth groups lack space to undertake outreach work, so subsidised letting of the Corn Exchange/Burwell Hall for dedicated weekly/monthly sessions or a youth club could be considered from the fund.

It is understood the County Council has also reconstituted an Oxfordshire Youth Service for the targeting support and outreach to young people, focusing on early intervention to reduce risk of exploitation, offending behaviour, substance misuse, exclusion, housing issues as well as improving mental wellbeing.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **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.

### **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. The Purpose of the Town Council's Youth Services Grant 2022-23. If members would like to review, a report can be brought back to the next committee meeting.