

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES' FORUM HELD AT MICROSOFT TEAMS ON FRIDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2023 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT

C A M Walter Chair



Meeting ID: 2554

COUNCILLORS

N Alam
C J R Martin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. R E R Morris

2. YOUTH COUNCIL REDEVELOPMENT

Through the Basketball sessions on Blaby Road Park and the Boxing sessions currently running at South Wigston High School there are now individuals working directly with young people who can promote and signpost young people to the Youth Council once up and running.

The community usage of the Sports Hall at South Wigston High School was discussed as an extension of the Boxing sessions mentioned previously; it is believed that the school will manage the building during school hours and that a member of Everyone Active staff will be present for the afterschool and weekend activities taking place there. This is subject to change as the contract for the Sports Hall is currently being developed.

Roller skating previously took place at Parklands Leisure Centre but this isn't necessarily viable now; the Sports Hall at South Wigston High School may well be a good venue for this project to restart. There are a number of existing community groups looking for venues to operate from on a larger scale than the Council's current buildings allow for. The buildings would be good for 'roaming' Youth Council meetings but don't lend themselves well to more physically active youth groups.

The Ritz building on Blaby Road was queried as a possible venue for Soft Touch Arts but this is now being turned into a pool hall. It may be suitable for a South Wigston based version of a youth pool project that had previously taken place at the Winchester in Wigston.

The Chair and M Smith highlighted their meeting a month or two prior to this evening's meeting that took place at Elliot Hall discussing the Youth Council. It was hoped that more Partners would be present this evening to have input into the redevelopment of the Youth

Council. Members heard that the Youth Council last successfully met in the February before the Covid-19 lockdowns commenced.

There needs to be buy-in from schools and existing youth groups to signpost young people to the Youth Council, but there needs to be an established plan for the Youth Council in order to 'sell the product' to young people who may wish to join. Typically the Youth Council has attracted 'academically high-flying young people' which does not lend itself to being full representative of Youth Voice in the Borough.

Previously the Youth Council met on a monthly basis at 7pm on a Monday evening. Part of the discussion the Chair and M Smith had is that this meeting time may prohibit some of the younger young people from attending. The Youth Council also only met in the Council Chamber at Bushloe House; taxis were utilised to bring young people to and from the meeting but this utilised the Youth Council's limited budget. The initial intention is that the Youth Council, when restarted, meets every other month with the venue to alternate around the Borough to enable a larger cohort of young people to attend. For specific project work meeting times could be changed or extended to allow young people the opportunity to progress their projects.

Cllr. Alam queried if the Youth Council has a budget available to it. It is thought that it still has an allocation of £500.00 from OWBC to support it; this has typically been used for taxis and the purchase of hoodies etc. The Youth Council, through its Terms of Reference, are also able to raise funds through any lawful methods to support their work.

Cllr. Alam also asked if the schools are aware of the existence of a Youth Council in the Borough. Members heard that schools have had previous awareness of the Youth Council but there has been no promotion of it this academic year as it is not currently meeting. Once a plan is in place regarding the Youth Council the schools will be approached again to support this, especially where the schools may already operate a School Council.

It was proposed that a date will be set for an initial Youth Council meeting to take place after the next meeting of this Forum. This Forum already has a meeting date set for February 2024. This will allow for the Community and Wellbeing Team to develop the idea of the Youth Council further and finalise an approach to its development.

Members heard that in the appendix of the draft Youth Strategy document there is a list of 21 youth groups that exist in, or provide coverage of, the Borough. Since this was drafted over a year ago this number has reduced to 18, the majority of which are uniformed or religious groups.

In an ideal world the Youth Council would like to have two young people per Council Ward participating as a minimum. This is not prohibitive of other young people joining as the Youth Council's membership accepts young people who live, work, or school in the Borough or regularly visit it for any purpose. Toward the end of its previous run the Youth Council was particularly Oadby heavy.

Cllr. Walter has spoken with the Council's Comms Team around potentially developing three events in the Borough to promote Youth Voice. These could be developed by the Youth Council, as per Supersonic Boom in previous years, which makes events attractive to young people knowing that their peers 'had a heavy hand' in organising the events.

Members are aware that from a young person's perspective there has to be benefits from participating in a Youth Council. There were discussions around how the lack of benefits may dissuade young people from joining, and that without a meaningful budget providing

benefits may be difficult. The Youth Council being empowered to raise funds as an independent group means that they will be able to apply for funding pots that OWBC, as a local authority, may be barred from accessing.

Members queried if the Council could apply for funding on behalf of the Youth Council, before it has youth members, as an incentive for young people to join as there would then be a budget available for the pursuit of projects they may wish to undertake. It was noted that this would still mean that OWBC would be the body applying for funding and this would prohibit access to some pots. It was discussed that further down the line, if there are young people interested in joining the Youth Council but not enough for a quorate meeting to take place, that a Community Interest Company may be able to apply for funding on the Youth Council's behalf.

The Chair queried as to whether funding available through the Police and Crime Commissioner could be applied for to support the development of the Youth Council. It was noted that this is unlikely as the Council, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, already directly receives funding from the OPCC to support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan locally. It would be a hard sell, if the Council could apply, to say that it is applying for funding as the Council to support the development of the Youth Council which would then, as an independent body, take control of any monies left over from a potential OPCC grant.

For the Youth Council to be considered quorate there needs to be a minimum of 9 young people present in the group or at meetings. This is seen as being three young people from each settlement area of the Borough, with a view of then growing to around 21 young people. The Borough's Youth Council was the longest in existence, at 17-18 years, which Blaby and other areas have then approached the Council for guidance on developing their own Youth Councils.

It was noted that with the darker nights rolling in there is expected to be an increase in anti-social behaviour as this is a seasonal trend. If Partner Agencies were present it may have been possible to hear how this would be addressed by outreach teams etc. and how they may be able to speak with young people about developing a Youth Council.

Based on the 2022 Census roughly one quarter of the Borough's population is aged under 19 years. This is the highest in the County for youth population. Roughly 13% of the Borough's population is in the core age range of 11-19. This does not account for young people who travel into the area for school and youth groups. This is approximately 21,000 young people who should be being canvassed in relation to Youth Voice. There is a longer term goal in the Youth Strategy of there being a Youth Mayor to act as a 'First Citizen' for young people in the Borough.

It was noted that many of the Council's Elected Members have children within the right age range to join the Youth Council and that this would be a great starting point for getting the relaunch underway. There is also a number of Youth Council hoodies and t-shirts in storage at the Freer Centre that can be provided to young people who attend a number of meetings once underway.

M Smith agreed to circulate the existing Terms of Reference for the Youth Council to the CYP Forum members.

It is hoped that once the Youth Council has restarted it becomes a self-running, self-sustaining group that could act as a 'tactical arm' of the CYP Forum.

The Chair noted that Everyone Active may be able to provide some items, such as free gym memberships for young people in the Youth Council, as an incentive for young people to join.

M Smith noted that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport have announced a significant reinvestment in the youth sector at a national level. A grant pot of £19m is expected to become available as well as bursaries for the training of 500+ new Youth Workers in the UK. Areas that have been identified by Central Government to be eligible to apply for this funding have also been listed; nowhere in South Leicestershire is on the list with Earl Shilton being the closest location stated. The list of locations may change, as levels of anti-social behaviour appears to be a main deciding factor, but in all cases the County Council will be expected to be the lead agency for the usage of available funding; it is likely through this that the Children, Families and Wellbeing Service will undergo a restructure in view of the new duties the funding will place on the County Council.

M Smith noted that youth work tends to be a cyclical process and that when it is going well, at the top of the circle, funding starts to be gradually withdrawn until anti-social behaviour begins to increase and funding is reinvested. We are now at the reinvestment stage at a national level.

3. YOUTH STRATEGY DOCUMENT

It was noted that a copy of the current draft Strategy document needs to be shared with CYP Forum Members to allow for them to comment on it. It is hoped that a final draft of the Strategy can be presented to the Council's PFD Committee on 26 March, containing the 2022 Census data and allowing for any changes proposed by the CYP Forum to be incorporated into it between the CYP Forum's February meeting and the date of the PFD Committee. M Smith will action this.

4. PARTNER UPDATES

Soft Touch Arts have applied for funding for a project on Blaby Road Park; they are confident that they will receive the funding for an art and music project based on works they have undertaken in other areas of Leicester. The project will not run on the same nights as the Basketball sessions in order to allow young people to participate in both. The Basketball sessions and any outreach sessions will signpost young people to the Soft Touch Arts project once organised.

M Smith will double check the Mod.Gov mailing list for this Forum to ensure that the addresses it contains are up to date. The inclusion of Partners around the table at the Forum is key to seeing the Youth Council etc. being successful.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr. Alam noted that one of the main issues facing young people now is mental health, and that there are now a lot of issues taking place with vaping amongst the youth population. It is hoped that through the development of a Youth Council it would be possible to put motions before the Full Council to support projects put forward by young people to address these issues.

It was suggested that as a further means to capture Youth Voice a number of focussed online forums could be developed to engage with young people on particular topics. Schools would be required to be a big supporter of these forums taking place as they would tie into PSHE and Citizenship topics within the National Curriculum.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 6.50 pm