

## EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

<b>Committee:</b>	Youth Engagement Review Task and Finish Panel	<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 18 May 2015
<b>Place:</b>	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	<b>Time:</b>	7.00 - 7.50 pm
<b>Members Present:</b>	Councillors S Murray (Chairman) G Mohindra (Vice-Chairman) R Butler, J McIvor, M Tinker and B Surtees		
<b>Other Councillors:</b>	Councillors H Kane		
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillors C Roberts		
<b>Officers Present:</b>	J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services)), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer) and R Perrin (Democratic Services Assistant)		

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### 6. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted there were no substitute members appointed for this meeting.

### 7. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of member Conduct.

### 8. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes from the 20 April 2015 meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the removal of 'for the remainder of the municipal year' from the resolution of the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman sought agreement from the Panel to continue their membership till the completion of the Task and Finish Panel in October 2015 with the removal K Adams, who was not re-elected on 7 May 2015.

**Agreed** that membership for the Task and Finish Panel would be proposed for the 2015/16 annual year.

### 9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel considered its Terms of Reference, as agreed at the last meeting and the Chairman requested that point 3 be split into two.

**Agreed** that point 3 be split into two as follows;

"3. To consider feedback from local schools and other partners in respect of the work of the Youth Council.

4. To include a London authority and a comparative District Council in Essex."

**10. EPPING FOREST YOUTH COUNCIL**

Matthew and Jaymey gave a presentation regarding the current Youth Council 2014-16 and their predecessors with their achievements over the last seven years. (attached)

Councillor Butler praised the Youth Council and their achievement.

Councillor Mohindra asked for details on the Volunteering day organised for August 2015. Jaymey advised that it would be held in the Summer Holidays and details would be passed onto Councillor Mohindra via email.

Councillor Surtees asked the Youth Councillors whether they felt the Youth Council reached out far enough to young people in rural areas of the District. Jaymey advised that the Youth Council had completed a mapping exercise of youth services and groups across the District which mapped the youth services, clubs and groups. He also acknowledged that the secondary schools were very influential. The Youth Council also used social media to reach out to young people all over the District and this was a very effective tool.

Councillor Surtees advised that the work being done by the Youth Council was impressive but commented that perhaps the wider community, in particular adults might not be aware of the Youth Council. Matthew advised that the Youth Council had been advertised through the Forester, which had been available to all residents, they likewise engaged in local press releases and had webpages dedicated to the Youth Council through the District Council website. The Youth Council had also used external funding to provide Intergenerational days for sheltered housing residents around the District, which allowed Youth Councillors and residents to socialise, with donations collected by the Youth Council from the Local community. Jaymey suggested that further promotional flyers and posters could be placed in sport centres and libraries around the District, although Epping Sports centre were already displaying a Youth Council board. The Panel also suggested that Town and Parish Councils could be contacted as well.

Councillor Murray enquired how the Youth Council received feedback from young people. Matthew advised that Youth Councillors were available to be contacted through email, Facebook, Twitter and suggestion cards in schools. An example of how this worked was when Matthew received a suggestion cards asking for advice on Stress. This was then followed up by Stress awareness posters being displayed in schools, assemblies and receiving feedback from pupils within the school directly. Jaymey gave another example with a problem raised at St John's School regarding transport. This enabled the Youth Council to Mystery Shop different buses routes and companies in the District and feedback to Essex County Council (ECC). The feedback resulted in visual changes to the bus time tables, which were easier to read and similar to tube maps.

The Panel asked about the security and confidentiality of the suggestion cards. Jaymey advised that all information from suggestions cards was dealt with confidentially and that the Youth Councillors had received training on this matter. The issues raised would be handed over to officers and discuss at full Youth Meetings, if appropriate to work out a solution. The location of the boxes differs depending on the schools but all were placed in public areas with adult monitoring.

The panel wanted to thank the Youth Councillors from their presentation and were very impressed with the variety and ways in which they communicate with their peers.

**Agreed** that the presentation would be circulated to Members of the Panel via email.

#### **11. YOUTH COUNCIL - LOCAL SCHOOLS FEEDBACK**

The Chairman advised the Panel that half of the questionnaires sent out to the local schools had been received back and copies were handed out to Members at the meeting. The Panel decided that the information should also be circulated to Members of Panel not in attendance and that they would consider the comments at the next meeting. It was also noted that mainly Head teachers had taken the time to complete the questionnaires.

The Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager advised that any other questionnaire's received back before the next meeting would be scanned and sent out to the Panel.

**Agreed** that the questionnaires responses from the remaining schools would be emailed immediately onto Panel Members and members would consider the responses for the next meeting.

#### **12. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The panel discussed the business required for the next two meetings held on 22 June 2015 and 8 July 2015.

**Agreed** that;

1. On the 22 June 2015 the Panel would consider the following items;
  - Finance of the Youth Council;
  - Feedback from the school Questionnaires;
  - Comparisons from a London Authority and similar District Council in Essex;
  - Feedback on other Youth Councils.
2. On the 8 July 2015 the Panel would consider the following items;
  - The wider Youth Strategy and engagement undertaken by the Council; and
  - Essex County Council services for young people.

#### **13. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The Panel discussed the alternative dates suggested.

**Agreed** that future dates for the Task and Finish Panel were;

- Wednesday 8 July 2015;
- Tuesday 11 August 2015; and
- Monday 14 September 2015.

#### **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Panel noted that the next meeting would be Monday 22 June 2015 at 19.00 in the Council Chamber.

**CHAIRMAN**

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## **Youth Engagement Task and Finish Panel: Terms of Reference**

### **Origin**

At its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a request from the Leisure and Community Services Portfolio Holder, to establish a new Task and Finish Panel to review potential options for the best use of the existing Council budget for youth engagement, which is currently utilised for operation of the Epping Forest Youth Council.

### **Terms of Reference**

1. To review the operation of the Youth Council and identify specific areas of work undertaken and the success and impact of these;
2. To review the level of engagement the Youth Council has with peers in local schools and 'other young people' of all ages across the district, through the range of work undertaken by the Youth Council and the importance of this engagement for local community groups;
3. To consider feedback from local schools and other partners in respect of the work of the Youth Council;
4. To include a London authority and a comparative District Council in Essex;
5. To identify the expenditure related to various elements of the Youth Council work programme and analyse the cost/benefit of this;
6. To consider other work undertaken by Community Services and Safety to engage with young people and identify the costs associated with this;
7. To consider the status of Essex Youth Services following recent service transformation and resulting implications for the district; and,
8. To prepare a set of recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in November 2015.

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## EFYC Presentation to Youth Engagement T & F Panel 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015

The purpose of our presentation this evening is to give you an in-sight into the activity of the currently elected cohort of Youth Councillors, and also a broader overview of the work of our predecessors since the Youth Council was originally formed seven years ago in 2009. To compliment our presentation, packs have been put together for each of you with examples of the resources the Youth Council has lead on producing, conference reports, photographs and so on.

In terms of the current cohort, our predecessors did an excellent job at handing over the baton to ensure that we had an "A" political elected body of 21 Youth Councillors from April 2014.

45 candidates stood for the 21 seats that were up for grabs last March and an amazing 2488 votes were democratically cast making the last elections the best ever.

The Youth Council`s primary focus this year is to ensure that our peers and schools are fully involved in our work. We are continuing to report to School Councils in order to be a clear link between wider young people and the District Council.

By far our highest profile event since taking up office was our Youth Conference on 14th October last year. We hosted the Epping Forest Youth Conference in the Council Chamber and 90 pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, representing ten secondary schools from in and around the Epping Forest District, came along. We wanted to consult with our peers about the main issues affecting the lives of local young people. We wanted to get their views on possible solutions, and gather their innovative ideas on how to improve the local community. Additionally we were keen to promote the importance of local democracy to pupils.

The three main concerns highlighted by our delegates were, alcohol misuse, bullying and stress. Issues also raised were around skills and jobs, the need for more volunteering opportunities for young people and the misuse of drugs, particularly "legal highs."

Our findings have been shared with the Epping Forest Youth Strategy Group, and we really hope that the people who hold the purse strings take notice of what local young people are saying.

In response to delegates` specific concerns that bullying is a major issue, and that it is not always addressed by schools, the Youth Councillors launched our own campaign called " #URNot Alone" during National Bullying Awareness Week in November.

Our campaign highlighted the services and support groups for victims of bullying and their parents. Youth Councillors delivered school presentations on this topic and to compliment these, we designed a USB memory stick wrist band promoting the #URNotAlone Bullying Awareness campaign. It includes the link to the EFYC web page which has our Fact Sheet promoting phone numbers and support groups for

young people, victims and parents. The wrist bands were distributed to pupils and teachers also gave their support by posting selfies on the EFYC Facebook page, holding the #URNotAlone statement and promoting the support services such as Childline and Samaritans. The project was deemed a great success by pupils, parents and teaching staff. Most significantly, last month our work was formally recognised when we were awarded the prestigious County-wide High Sheriff of Essex's shield and £1000 towards our project.

Social media is an important part of our work as it not only promotes what we are doing but it raises the positive profile of young people in the Epping Forest district. We currently have 515 followers on Twitter and 389 'Likes' on Facebook. During our anti-bullying campaign we had over 7200 views on Twitter and 42 new followers.

Giving young people a voice is what the Youth Council is all about. Therefore, we have been delighted to have been asked to contribute to 10 separate consultations since taking up office and we're also pleased to have representation on the Epping Forest Youth Strategy Group, where we feel we make a valuable contribution and give young people a voice in the decision making process.

Youth volunteering is a big theme for us. As young volunteers ourselves we are passionate about encouraging other young people to volunteer. We really like the Council's Youth Volunteer Programme which is now being taken up by all secondary schools in the district. We ourselves have tried out one of the Youth Volunteer Days and were supported by staff from the City of London to help clear an area of woodland. This was a great team building experience for us, but more than that, we felt a real sense of achievement at the end of the day. Consequently, in the summer we are hosting an open youth volunteering day where wider young people can come along and give volunteering a try.

To support this work we have secured funding from the Police & Crime Commissioners fund to re-visit a project our predecessors started – this involved the production of a "Young Persons' Guide to Volunteering". The guides, which are provided in a handy Oyster card holder wallet, signpost young people towards volunteering opportunities and include some handy tips about volunteering.

Something that we hear a lot is that there is a need to break down barriers between the older residents in the district and young people. Our predecessors developed the inter-generational project which has been well received by the residents from Jubilee Court in Waltham Abbey and Leonard Davis House in North Weald. We, in turn, have hosted an event at Buckhurst Court in Buckhurst Hill in partnership with the Voluntary Action Epping Forest Carers Group and Sheltered Housing team. Lots more of these types of event are planned as the feedback we have had from older residents has been overwhelmingly positive.

Another event that we have been involved in was a project developed by Community Services called Rural Roots. A large scale community fun day was organised in the village of Fyfield last summer and we were pleased to support this in a number of ways; in advance of the event we spoke to local businesses and collected donations to the value of £400, and we then manned stalls on the day and raised a further £120 for the Help the Heroes charity.



A further notable achievement for us is that Youth Councillor Evangeline Foster was selected as an Ambassador for the prestigious 'Step Up to Serve' campaign, for her community and volunteering work. Evie also sits on the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner Youth Forum and has taken part in County consultations to address the issues raised by young people.

Over the past 7 years the Youth Council has lead on numerous high profile projects. These have included:

- Environmental initiatives involving schools surveys and the subsequent distribution of energy saving devices for school IT departments.
- Transport initiatives involving mystery shopping the quality of the local bus services for young people, a comprehensive survey and subsequent discussions with Essex County Council about the concerns of Epping Forest young people.
- Speed meeting events with adult Council Members and senior officers
- A project focussing on personal safety and the development of an educational DVD and booklet called "How Safe Are You". This particular project was adopted across West Essex as it was so well received. There was also a follow up card produced clarifying "How to Report a Crime".
- One of the highest profile initiatives that the Youth Council has been involved in consistently over the years is the mapping of local youth groups in the area. Following the familiar comment from young people that there is "nothing to do" in their area, back in 2011 Youth Councillors first came up with the idea of identifying exactly what groups were running and then going to visit them "under cover" to review what they were like. The additional benefit of this exercise was that it allowed Youth Councillors to consult with local young people who live in the area but attend school outside of the district. Ultimately, this then lead to the first Youth Project of the Year Awards with groups being star rated. The following year the project grew, and the first tube-map style posters were produced showing young people where youth groups were running and how to contact them. The most recent tube map was put together in 2014. Ultimately, this is an excellent example of a piece of work done for young people, by young people, that no other agency had previously undertaken in our area.
- Numerous events and conferences have been organised by the Youth Council and radio interviews and press releases happen on a regular basis – all of which raise the profile of Epping Forest young people and the District Council.

A significant number of Youth Councillors have gone on to be high profile ambassadors for young people over the years. Many have gone on to become Head Boy or Girl in their school, many have further promoted the youth democracy agenda whilst at university, and 6 past Youth Councillors have actually secured employment with the Council as casual staff supporting holiday initiatives for children and young people.

Finally, we feel that a significant fact to note is that, since being set up in 2009, the Youth Council has been able to secure in excess of £28,000 of external funding for youth initiatives in the district. This is funding that we are told would not have been available to the Council without a constituted body of young people in place.

We appreciate that we've covered lots of information very quickly here, so please feel free to ask us any questions you may have. The packs that you have contain a wealth of information which we would encourage you to peruse at your leisure.

Thank you for listening.