

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 22 JUNE 2015
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.30 PM

Members Present: S Murray (Chairman), , G Mohindra, S Neville, A Patel, C Roberts and B Surtees

Youth Council members present: J McIvor and M Tinker

Other members present: H Kane

Apologies for Absence:

Officers Present J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services)), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager) and R Perrin (Democratic Services Assistant)

15. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.07.02)

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

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, School Questionnaire as he was employed by one of the schools consulted. The Councillor had determined that his interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor B Surtees declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, School Questionnaire as he was a Chair of schools Governor. The Councillor had determined that his interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

17. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes from the meeting on 18 May 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

18. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted that the Terms of Reference had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2015.

19. YOUTH COUNCIL FINANCE

The Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager, G Wallis presented the details of the finance for the Epping Forest Youth Council (EFYC) which included the operational budget, external funding secured and the total salaries for the staff supporting the

Youth Council, of which it had been advised that 60% of their time had been allocated to the Youth Council.

The operational budget for each financial year and had been split into three key areas which included Training, Development and Events; Transport and Travel; and General, Publicity, Equipment etc. G Wallis advised that Youth Councillors had previously attended annually the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to bid for their funding from the District Development Fund (DDF) which had changed two years ago and they were now funded from the General Fund.

Councillor Murray stated that the external funding secured over the life time of EFYC also translated into around 39% of the funds allocated to them.

Councillor Mohindra enquired whether the external funding offset the expenditure of the Youth Council. G Wallis advised that this was additional funding that the Council was able to access because of the youth engagement the Youth Council had been involved in and had been used specifically to deliver project work through EFYC. Therefore, it did not serve to reduce the actual cost of the Youth Council.

Councillor Patel asked about the external funding and whether any other sources had been pursued. G Wallis advised that the Essex County Council funding opportunities had reduced significantly since the creation of EFYC and other funding which they provided through the Youth Strategy Group was aimed at other voluntary groups in the District.

Councillor Patel enquired whether private companies were able to sponsor the EFYC. M Tinker advised that they had contacted local business to support events such as the Intergenerational events and Fyfield Rural Roots event, for raffle prizes. G Wallis advised that sponsorship would be welcomed by the Youth Council.

The Panel felt that the EFYC had been effectively delivered and financially controlled.

Agreed that the Panel noted the following comments;

- (a) that the EFYC budget and associated costs had not increased since EFYC had began in 2008;
- (b) that the EFYC had generated the equivalent of 39% of it's running costs in external funding; and
- (c) that the Youth Councillors themselves had independently applied and acquired external funding for EFYC.

20. SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

G Wallis advised that she had received all school questionnaire responses, which varied considerably.

M Tinker advised the Panel that Roding Valley High School had a dedicated teacher who supported the Youth Councillors in their roles within the school and had even allowed them to lead the School Council.

Councillor Mohindra asked whether a teacher was appointed within the school as a direct contact and support to the Youth Councillors. J McIvor advised that problems arose when the support teachers left and were either not replaced or the same support level and interest was not given.

Councillor Neville asked what had been done to encourage participation and what the age range was. J Mclvor advised that EFYC attended various events across the District which included volunteering and conferences to promote the Youth Council. G Wallis advised that the age range for EFYC was between 13-17 years old and they served for a two year term. The promotion for the elections involved around 25 assisted assemblies, social media, press releases, posters and various events attended by the EFYC in the run up to the elections which were all held within each school in a week period in February.

Councillor Mohindra asked about the turn out at elections. G Wallis advised that the turn out was very high because it was a captive audience and all voters were given the chance within the school day to vote. J Mclvor also advised that he had spoken on radio, which helped to make the parents aware of the opportunity and elections.

The Assistant Director (Community Services and Safety), J Chandler advised that the types of candidates nominated and elected varied. Nevertheless they were all nurtured and supported through their term of office, which improved their knowledge and confidence.

M Tinker advised that he was a member of Youth Parliament (YP) which required schools to sign up to 'Make your Mark' campaign. The campaign required him to distribute ballot papers across the District for young people to have their voice heard and vote on issues that affected them on a national level. EFYC enabled him to contact and distribute these ballot papers in the schools through the Youth Councillors, which would not be possible without the existence and input of the EFYC.

Councillor Mohindra asked how EFYC compared to peer groups met through YP. J Mclvor advised that EFYC was very productive, consulted and delivered on projects within their term of office compared to others.

Councillor Surtees enquired about promoting EFYC to year 6 pupils. J Chandler advised that they had not pursued mainly because it was evident that some Year 6 pupils already struggle with the transition to secondary school, so most initiatives (with the exception of Crucial Crew) were held off until Year 8. However, it could be considered.

Councillor Mohindra enquired about the EFYC Chairman's position. J Mclvor advised that the Chairmanship rotated around the group to allow everyone to have the chance to chair a meeting and use the training they have obtained.

The Panel enquired whether acknowledgements had been sent to the schools regarding the comments. G Wallis advised that officers had already sent responses.

The Panel **noted** the school questionnaires responses.

21. FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL PARTNERS

G Wallis advised that feedback had been received from all the Local Partners contacted, which included local statutory, community and voluntary sectors such as Loughton Town Council, City of London, The Red Balloon Family, Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) and Essex County Council.

M Tinker advised that EFYC had been involved in various events that the Youth Council had been invited to by Local Partners. J McIvor indicated that the EFYC was established group and local partners were now inviting them as standard.

Councillor Mohindra asked the Youth Councillors what legacy they wanted for the EFYC in five years. M Tinker advised that he wanted to see a Youth Council still present. J McIvor stated that he felt that EFYC was an established group and that it had made a difference, allowing young peoples voices to be heard, so he would like that to continue.

Councillor Surtees asked whether EFYC was consulted by the Council. G Wallis advised that EFYC had been consulted on various third party consultations but although they were already a consultee on various Council items, perhaps this could be pursued further.

M Tinker suggested that Councillors be emailed a copy of the British Youth Council – Positive Stories document each month to allow Councillors to compare nationally the youth groups.

The panel **agreed** for British Youth Council – Positive Stories document to be emailed by Di Butler to all Members.

The Panel **noted** that positive comments had been received from all the Local partners (attached).

22. COMPARISONS FROM LONDON AUTHORITY AND SIMILAR DISTRICT COUNCIL IN ESSEX

The Community Policy and Grants Manager, C Overend presented comparative information with regards to youth councils in a range of other local authority areas which included Harlow Youth Council, St Albans, Hillingdon Young People/Youth Council and Bromley Youth Support Programme and Youth Hubs. The local authorities assessed were chosen because of the more extensive breadth of their youth councils. The work being carried out at other several other local authorities was also looked at but in many instances consisted of no more than a brief summary. In comparative terms, the work being carried in Epping Forest was more extensive and impressive.

The Panel **noted** the comparative information of Harlow Youth Council, St Albans, Hillingdon Young People/Youth Council and Bromley Youth Support Programme and Youth Hubs.

23. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed that on the 8 July 2015 the Panel would consider the following items;

1. The Wider Youth Strategy and Engagement undertaken by the Council; and
2. Essex County Council Services for Young People.
3. Parish and Town Engagement with the Youth Council.

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

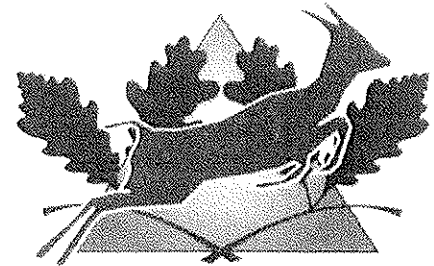
The Panel noted that the next meeting would be Wednesday 8 July 2015 at 19.00 in Committee Room 1.

The Panel noted that future dates for the Task and Finish Panel were;

- Tuesday 11 August 2015; and
- Monday 14 September 2015.

This page is intentionally left blank

Our ref: E.7.1/EKW



LOUGHTON
TOWN COUNCIL

1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane
Loughton, Essex IG10 2QZ
Telephone: 020 8508 4200
Facsimile: 020 8508 4400
e-mail: contact@loughton-tc.gov.uk
Web site: www.loughton-tc.gov.uk
Town Clerk: Enid K Walsh

Ms Diane Butler
Youth Engagement Officer
Epping Forest District Council
25 Hemnall Street
Epping CM16 4LU

29 April 2015

Dear Diane

Youth Engagement activity in Epping Forest

On behalf of the Town Council I am pleased to write in support of the work and contribution made by Epping Forest Youth Council.

It has been impressive to see the various projects undertaken by the youth councillors, particularly the recent anti-bullying awareness work and the provision of safety advice to young people. This is clear evidence of their engagement with the wider community.

Our local Loughton youth councillors have also attended many of our community events during recent years. They have acted as excellent ambassadors for the young people in the town by giving readings at official services and by the laying of wreathes. These have included WWI centenary services and our commemoration of the award of the Victoria Cross to Private Sidney Godley last August, and also at our annual Civic Services.

We value their support and assistance when we need to engage with our young people, for example over the forthcoming consultation on refurbishment of the play area off Traps Hill.

Given their personal education commitments, their achievements during their 2-year terms of office have been impressive although this will have been made easier by the support and expertise of the relevant District Council staff.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information for this review.

Yours sincerely

Enid K Walsh
Town Clerk

Open Spaces Department

Sue Ireland BSc, MSc, MIPGS
Director of Open Spaces



Email alison.tapply@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Date 29 May 2015

Diane Butler
Youth Engagement Officer
Epping Forest District Council
25 Hemnal Street
Epping
CM16 4LU

Dear Diane

EFDC Youth Engagement Review

We have been working in partnership with the EFDC for the last four years delivering practical conservation projects together on the Forest with the Youth Council. These sessions are invaluable to us for a number of reasons, they:

- Forge a link between the Forest and an often difficult to reach section of the community – young people
- Allow us to gather ideas and present our ideas regarding youth engagement
- Work as a platform for us to promote positive messages about the Forest and how to enjoy it
- Allow the young people to act as champions for the Forest as they pass on information to their peers therefore increasing the impact of the work we do together spreading the message

The young people engage in activities where they gain skills in the following:

- Team building
- Leadership
- Learn new skills using specialist tools and equipment
- Discover about conservation management techniques

If you would like to discuss any for these points further, please get in touch. Yours sincerely

Mrs Alison Tapply
Forest Keeper



"Creating opportunities for everyone to discover and become who they were designed to be..."

19th May 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Epping Forest Youth Council

Having now been working with children and young people in Epping Forest in various roles since 2003 (as a member of staff at Davenant Foundation School, Children's Pastor at St. Mary's Church in Loughton and now as Director of the RBF Foundation), I have had the privilege to see the Epping Forest Youth Council develop from its inception to its current iteration under Di Butler's leadership.

For those young people who participate as council members themselves, it is undoubtedly a formational experience that clearly has a lasting impact on their personal development and future prospects. It is an activity that not only 'looks good on a CV' but actually gives the participant a transferrable skill set that can be applied in a wide variety of further education/employment opportunities; creating well rounded, confident individuals who are skilled communicators and strong advocates for their peers.

Like any elected body, the challenge for the Youth Council is to continue to engage effectively with their electorate outside of campaign time and in my experience the Youth Council has been more successful at this than many of their senior counterparts. I have worked in partnership with YC members on a number of initiatives over the years, bringing them into contact with non-YC members and ensuring they are hearing from young people who aren't necessarily those who might be in their social circle and are from other parts of the district that they may not have encountered before. The output of the Youth Council, such as the Personal Safety DVD and the Volunteering Card have largely been well received by the young people that I work with and are good examples of where the Youth Councillors can be observed by their electorate as adding value locally.

As with any democratic structure, the more opportunities for interaction between constituents and elected members the better, so I would suggest that in future, more opportunities be created for the Youth Councillors to actively engage with the young people they represent be created to ensure that there is an ongoing dialogue rather than just on a project-by-project basis, and not necessarily just through formal 'consultations' or 'conferences' as these tend to give one-off snapshots rather than being ongoing conversations. As part of the Youth Opportunities 'Tube Map' information gathering process, youth councillors have visited a wide variety of local projects in previous years and I wonder whether this could happen on a more regular basis with youth councillors having one evening a month (for instance) where they are released from their council meetings to effectively run a 'surgery' at a local group where their role is to actively engage with the participants to not only hear young people's views on the ground but also to further raise the profile of the Youth Council locally, ensuring that the business of the Youth Council retains a sharp focus on what young people in the District are really asking for as well as the personal passions and causes that the Councillors themselves feel strongly about.

RBF would be more than happy to partner with EFDC in any future development of the Youth Council as we see them as a highly worthwhile local body whose role and position has the potential to grow and expand greatly as advocates and service deliverers as other local youth services continue to contract and 'transition' as statutory resources become more scarce. We feel any reduction in their remit, scope or level of engagement would be to the detriment of all young people in the District.

Yours Faithfully,

*Luke Lowrie
Director
The Red Balloon Family Foundation*

The Red Balloon Family Foundation – a Registered Charity in England and Wales (1158982)

56 Thaxted Road
Buckhurst Hill
IG96AW

office@redballoonfamily.co.uk
www.redballoonfamily.co.uk
www.facebook.com/redballoonfamily

020 3086 8186
@redballoonfam
instagram.com/redballoonfamily

From: jfoile@vaef.org.uk
Sent: 06 May 2015 16:50:16
To: Diane Butler
Cc: Julie Chandler; jsymes@vaef.org.uk
Subject: Youth Engagement task and Finish Review

Hi Di

I hope you find the following information useful in response to your request for VAEF's comments on the District Council's youth engagement activity in Epping Forest. As you will note, the first few sentences are about the positive work VAEF have undertaken with the Youth Council. I have then shared some of my thoughts and observations on the Youth Council.

Firstly then, Voluntary Action Epping Forest Carers project has worked with the Youth Council on several Intergenerational project activities and each one has been a great success. The council members have made their own suggestions for activities and each taken on tasks to bring the event together at the same time as taking on the needs of the age group they would be working with. The group of carers are all over 65 and don't deal with young people on a regular basis but were keen to participate in the events. The activities included bingo, a music quiz, a sporting quiz, cake decorating, an Easter egg hunt and old fashioned games such as tiddlywinks and shove ha'penny. The youth councillors each sat on one of the quiz teams and the carers said they enjoyed having a young person on the team in their words it injected some life in to their team. The bingo calling certainly caused a few laughs with the older ladies not understanding the bingo language of the young caller.

The feedback from the carers was very positive saying what an enthusiastic bunch of young people the youth councillors were and how nice it was that they wanted to mix with the old folk. The opinion of the carers was that they would like to participate in future events as it was nice to be around young people. From our part even though VAEF does not now operate a Carers project at present, we would definitely be interested in working with the Youth Council again on a similar event at one of our Befriending clubs for older people.

When I met a number of the youth councillors at the EFDC conference I found them to be extremely bright and articulate and therefore probably the type of young people that may well have decided to contribute to their community with no encouragement in the first instance. It is for this reason I wonder whether more resource should be dedicated to working with those youngsters that do not have great opportunities ahead of them. This is not necessarily to say there shouldn't be a Youth Council as it is good to have representation from young people, but perhaps more of a balance is required.

You may also be interested to know that VAEF has just started to work with the youth offending team to try to support some of these young people onto a better pathway.

I hope you are keeping well Di and please let me know if VAEF can be of further assistance.

Regards

Jacqui

Jacqui Foile
Chief Officer
Voluntary Action Epping Forest
01992 564424

Gill Wallis

Subject:

FW: Review of Epping Forest Youth Council / Youth Engagement - ECC

From: Diane Butler
Sent: 04 June 2015 10:51
To: Gill Wallis
Cc: Chris Overend
Subject: Review of Epping Forest Youth Council / Youth Engagement - ECC

From: Vicky Young, West Senior Community Based Commissioner [<mailto:Vicky.Young@essex.gov.uk>]
Sent: 04 June 2015 10:16
To: Diane Butler
Subject: RE: Review of Epping Forest Youth Council - Urgent Request for Monday 1st June

Di,
Huge apologies for the delay!!

Young people themselves gain a great deal from their involvement in youth councils. The format has been very good, with young schools representatives, as it means that each young person in each school can express their views to their school council who in turn represent their views to the youth council (who in turn have the opportunity to represent their views at the Young Essex Assembly and from there the UK Youth Parliament). This ensures that young people's views and opinions are shared nationally.

The youth councillors themselves not only receive training and support to develop their skills in this role, they also gain confidence through expressing their voice and through the experiences they take part in, running events, meeting to councillors and this can open many doors for young people during their participation and in the future.

The Epping Forest Youth Council has been a shining example across Essex and is frequently referred to positively.

The Youth Council have at times worked with the ECC Youth Service, for example, they have been pro-active with the Youth Strategy Group stakeholder event this year. The young people attending this group requested the opportunity to be part of this and a group of them were involved in it's design and implementation. This may seem like a 'nice addition' to such an event, but this meeting is key in setting the outcomes that we will commission against for this financial year and their considerable involvement gives weight to discussions, particularly as they were able to put in views through their school networks, school councils and from their recent consultation. This helps us to ensure that we get the best outcomes set for young people. We also had a lot of positive feedback about these young people's involvement as being vital in the process. Without the training and experience these young people already have, this would not have been possible.

Youth Councillors are represented at the Youth Strategy Group meetings regularly, which is a group made up of ECC and EFDC officers, county councillors and other key representatives. It's purpose is to both steer and champion young people's services in Epping Forest. The youth councillors who attend this meeting have without exception participated well and been a clear voice of young people across the district, due to their clear links through the schools and other local groups. When they join in our debates, which they always do, their views carry weight and they often give examples which back up their arguments. I can honestly say that the youth council have a very positive and influential voice at these meetings and that their presence is valued by myself and the councillors.

Youth Council elections are very positive in schools and other youth settings for raising debate about politics and democracy and it encourages young people to see that there is good value in electing someone they can relate to who will represent their views.

I summarise to say that whilst I have worked with and witnessed a range of youth voice projects in the past, the EF Youth Council have over the years surpassed my expectations not just in their abilities but also in the way they conduct themselves. They have always been a credit to EFDC.

Regards

Vicky

Vicky Young

Senior Youth and Community Commissioner, West Essex

Essex County Council Youth Service

Goodman House, Station Approach, Harlow, CM20 2ET | telephone: 01279 404401 | email:

vicky.young@essex.gov.uk