

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 23 April 2024



Portfolio: Community Health and Wellbeing (Councillor Smruti Patel)

Subject: Annual review of the work undertaken by Epping Forest Youth Council (EFYC)

Officer contact for further information: Vanessa Gayton – Team Manager Community Development and Wellbeing

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives an annual progress report on the work undertaken by the Community Development and Wellbeing Team with the Epping Forest Youth Council.

Report:

Epping Forest Youth Council is a high-profile national award-winning Youth Council, comprising 23 young people, representing 8 Epping Forest secondary schools and the New City College (Epping Forest Campus). There is one independent Youth Councillor who is schooled online. These young people represent the views of their peers and wider school communities. The current cohort will stand down in May 2024. Some were successful in re-standing for election. Member support has enabled the Youth Council to continue creating youth friendly projects to engage with and benefit our communities.

On Tuesday 23 April the 2022 – 2024 Youth Council will make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighting their excellent work over the past year. They have been meeting fortnightly with the Young Persons' Officers, building on their training programme, taking part in consultations, learning about their local community from guest speakers and completing their project on the impact of the cost of living crisis.

The Youth Council will refer to the key areas of work undertaken in their final year.

1. 2024 Elections Campaign

The Epping Forest Youth Council has gone from strength to strength as it approaches its sixteenth year. The current Youth Councillors promoted the Youth Council in all secondary schools. As a result, a record number of 60 candidates stood for election, an outstanding turnout in the Epping Forest secondary schools. Elections took place throughout March at 7 of the schools, with the highest number of nominations being at Roding Valley High School where 17 candidates were put forward for the vote. The Youth Councillors will provide further detail on this successful campaign in their presentation.

2. Epping Forest Youth Conference November 2023

On Friday 17 November 2023 more than 125 delegates and teachers from 8 secondary schools and Coopersale Hall Prep school, attended the Epping Forest Youth Conference.

The theme was Let's Talk About Money, linking to the Youth Council's cost of living project. Guest organisations on the day talked about managing money, with a quiz around financial and employability skills. The Children's Society spoke of their school uniform campaign, to work with the government to ensure that uniform costs are reasonable. A charity spoke about their pre-loved uniform project and Youth Councillors shared their successes with setting up projects in their schools.

A debate around providing free public transport for all children, up to the age of 25 in full time education or from a low-income household resulted in 49% for and 51% against. Schools were asked to make a pledge to something they would change or continue to do, outside of the conference, to help their local communities with the cost-of-living crisis.

The #YourSay consultation result informed the decision for the Youth Council project for 2024/25.

3. Epping Forest Youth Council Project 2024/25

Epping Forest Youth Council applied for funding from the Community Safety Partnership and received £2,600 towards their youth project for 2024/25, which will address tackling alcohol and substance misuse issues.

In response to the #YourSay consultation, at the Epping Forest Youth Conference, 120 young people identified that alcohol and substance misuse, including underage vaping and the use of nitrous oxide cannisters, was a major concern.

The Epping Forest Youth Council believe that the 2024 youth project will address a key priority set out in the Epping Forest Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022- 2026, that is to tackle alcohol and substance misuse issues.

The Youth Councillors will aim to improve access to advice, support and education for young people experiencing these issues and to seek feedback on their understanding of the dangers of involvement in these activities. Raising awareness in schools will aim to reduce the stigma associated with alcohol and substance misuse, enabling discussion in a safe and supported environment.

4. Broadcast Roadshow for Secondary Schools

Epping Forest Youth Council were successful in securing £8,800 from the ECC Local Community Fund for the Broadcast roadshow, to deliver in nine secondary schools in the Epping Forest district. Arc Theatre's multi-media Broadcast programme has been developed to tackle the issue of sexual harassment with young people in Years 7 to 9.

Broadcast uses a range of activities and techniques, including Arc's highly engaging theatre discussion and short films, to reinforce positive messages, supporting young people to develop new and counter narratives to challenge Violence Against Women & Girls, abuse, misogyny, and domestic violence. The programme is devised to support schools to successfully deliver the new RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) and to support the health and wellbeing and safety of its students.

At the end of the programme, Arc Theatre will compile a project report containing student and staff feedback as well as anecdotal examples and statistics. The schools will receive the roadshow by the 30 June 2024.

5. Jack Petchey Foundation Funding

The Youth Council celebrated their 15th Anniversary in 2023 made possible by funding from the Jack Petchey Foundation. A further Jack Petchey Leader Award Grant was also received by Diane Gilson-Butler, Young Persons' Officer earlier in 2023 and some of the Youth Council attended the prestigious Jack Petchey 25th Anniversary. The Youth Councillors will share further details of the funding received from The Jack Petchey Foundation in their presentation.

Reason for decision:

It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive an annual update on the work undertaken by the Community Development and Wellbeing Team with Epping Forest Youth Council.

Options considered and rejected: N/A

Consultation undertaken:

A range of consultations are taken with the Youth Councillors about current issues which inform future projects that will benefit young people in our communities, engaging, educating and signposting them to ensure the environment they live in is a healthier, happier place. These will be included in the presentation.

Resource implications: There has been a reduction to the core funding for day to day support and running costs of the Youth Council. There is no additional funding for Youth Council project work in 2024/25. This will be sourced through external funding where required.

Legal and Governance Implications: N/A

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications: N/A

Background Papers: N/A

Impact Assessments: Equality Impact Assessment completed

Risk Management: N/A

Equality: Equality Impact Assessment completed