

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-063-2009/10
Date of meeting: 21 December 2009



Portfolio: Leisure and Well Being
Subject: Epping Forest Youth Council
Responsible Officer: Julie Chandler (01992 564214).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That, following recommendation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 12 November 2009, a bid for District Development Funding in the sum of £12,000 for the operation of the Youth Council be supported for inclusion in the 2010/11 Budget.

Executive Summary:

Epping Forest Youth Council has been established for two years with the original Youth Councillors nominated in 2007, completing their term of Office at Christmas 2009.

Elections were held in local schools in the Autumn to recruit new members for the Youth Council for the period 2010 /2012. Twenty-three young people were elected, representing all local secondary schools within the District (including Chigwell School and Braeside), along with three independent candidates that go to school outside of the District.

Operation of the Youth Council costs the Council approximately £12,000 per annum, which includes travelling expenses and taxi fares; a wide range of training and development, special events such as Youth Debates and EYC uniforms. This is not currently provided as part of the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) and therefore, each year, the Youth Council is required to present its case for funding, to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The outgoing Youth Councillors delivered a presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November 2009 for this purpose. It was unanimously agreed to recommend a DDF bid of £12,000 to Cabinet.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Youth Council needs a minimum budget of £12,000 per annum to function. As stated above, this amount covers travelling for those without transport: a range of training such as media, public speaking, chairing meetings etc.; costs of staging youth debates and forums and EYC uniforms for all youth councillors.

Other Options for Action:

To reject the recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, this would mean that some youth councillors would not be able to attend meetings due to lack of transport; the necessary training could not be delivered and limited work could be

undertaken.

Report:

1. Epping Forest Youth Council has been established since January 2007. Since this time, the Youth Council has successfully developed over the last two years, with the support of 17 youth councillors from local secondary schools and rural parts of the District, who were elected to represent the views of all young people from across the District.

2. During their term of office, which finishes at Christmas 2009, the Youth Council concentrated on five key priorities of work:

- The Environment;
- Transport;
- Safety;
- Activities for Young People; and
- Perceptions of Young People.

3. Sub groups were set up to address each of these priorities and work undertaken included focussed group work in schools on issues such as recycling and the environment, and production of a Drugs Awareness DVD which was presented to schools. The Youth Council were successful in securing around £12,000 external funding towards the various work and initiatives to address their Key Priorities.

4. A major part of their work also included an on line survey for young people in 2008, which attracted over 1000 responses and culminated in a 'Big Youth Debate' that was staged in November 2008. This event involved a further 200+ young people from the District aged 13 – 18 years, who had the opportunity to debate key issues with each other, and a panel of top tier agency professionals and MP's.

5. As the original Youth Council will shortly complete it's two-year cycle, a series of elections were held in local schools in the Autumn. The elections resulted in 21 new young people being successfully elected for the period 2010-12. In addition, two of the previous Youth Councillors were successfully nominated.

6. The New Youth Council were welcomed by the Council in October and are due to commence their role in full, in January 2010.

7. The running costs of the Youth Council are approximately £12,000 per annum, which includes costs of: Youth Councillor transport and travelling; training and induction; special events and uniforms. As this is not included as part of the Council's CSB, Youth Councillors are required to request DDF funding from the Council, through presenting details of their work and achievements to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was undertaken by the outgoing Youth Councillors in November. Their report was well received by Overview and Scrutiny Committee who agreed to recommend this DDF item to Cabinet.

8. Cabinet received this recommendation as part of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny's report in November. This report therefore requests that Cabinet formally agrees to a bid for £12,000 funding for operation of the Youth Council in 2010/11.

Resource Implications:

DDF funding of £12,000 for the financial year 2010/11

Legal and Governance Implications:

Epping Forest Youth Council is governed by the District Council and supported through the Council's Young Person's Officer, Community Development Officer and officers from Research and Democratic Services.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Council Plan Reference: A Safe Community Action SC3 – Provide training opportunities for Young People to encourage positive lifestyles. The purpose of the Youth Council is to represent the views of all local young people and to ensure that service provision meets local need, therefore reducing anti-social behaviour and youth nuisance.

Consultation Undertaken:

A major consultation exercise was undertaken with young people in 2008 including an on line survey which attracted 1000+ responses and the Big Youth Debate, which included around 200 x young people from across the District

Background Papers:

Epping Forest Youth Council Report November 2007. Findings from the Big Youth Debate December 2007.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The Council encourages people to take part in discussion and debate on services, particularly those who may be traditionally excluded from decision - making processes. In addition, the LAA Children and Young People block sets out how Local Authorities will aim to improve the lives of children and young people, and this includes through providing opportunities for them to articulate their concerns and ideas about how, and what services are provided for them locally. Therefore, without the Youth Council, the Council would not be meeting this directive. Child Protection has been assessed and addressed as part of the establishment of the Youth Council.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

See below

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

This report addresses equality, through actively encouraging and seeking participation in local decision making by young people of all abilities and ethnicity.