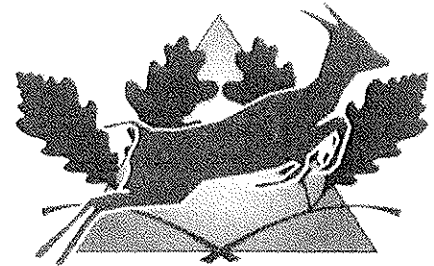


Our ref: E.7.1/EKW



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TOWN COUNCIL

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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](mailto: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..."*

19<sup>th</sup> 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)*

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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**

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**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](mailto:vicky.young@essex.gov.uk)