

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-029-2017/18
Date of meeting: 7 December 2017



Portfolio: Leisure and Community Services

Subject: Bid for Youth Council Project Budget

Responsible Officer: Julie Chandler (01992 564214).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations:

(1) That the Cabinet agrees to a DDF sum of £8,000, to enable the Epping Forest Youth Council, to deliver targeted projects during 2018/19, including MiLife emotional health & wellbeing programme and refresher workshops and assemblies in all local secondary schools in the District.

Executive Summary:

One of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Review of Youth Engagement in 2015/16 was that the Youth Council be granted £8,000 DDF project funding, for the purpose of providing targeted project work for young people in the district and that this opportunity of securing funding would be available in subsequent years.

In 2016/17 £8,000 this initial funding was used for the development of an adolescent mental and emotional health and wellbeing project, which was designed around concerns raised by local young people.

The project which was named MiLife, has been very successful since it was introduced and over the last year, has actively helped 328 pupils to receive support following their attendance at a MiLife session in their school. Its' success has also been highlighted by health colleagues across Essex, so much so, that the project is now available through a website, to enable it to be of benefit other schools across Essex.

In its first year, MiLife was nominated for the National Crime Beat Awards by the High Sheriff of Essex at that time, Lorna Rolfe and the project is due for further nomination in 2018 by the new High Sheriff, Simon Hall, following him attending a Youth Council presentation about the project.

This report therefore seeks further funding to enable MiLife to be rolled out to all new Year 7 students in local schools, to provide refresher assemblies to young people who have already attended a session and delivery of MiLife lunchtime sessions in all schools. In addition, the funding would support the roll out of the Primary School MiLife programme, which has recently been developed with the support of Public Health Funding.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Review of Youth Engagement in 2015/16, recommended that £8,000 DDF project funding be available for the Youth Council to bid for, in order to develop and deliver activities and events for young people.

Other Options for Action:

- (i) To not provide any funding for EYC project work.
- (ii) To reduce the amount of funding allocated to the Youth Council. However, if funding is reduced it will not be possible to provide MiLife work in all local secondary schools, or refresher sessions in schools.

Report:

Background

1. Epping Forest Youth Council enables young people to have a voice in their local district and to put forward the views and concerns of other local young people. Since its' inception, the Youth Council has been very proactive in developing a range of projects and programmes to benefit and support other young people across the Epping Forest District, including anti-bullying and drugs awareness campaigns.

2. The Community, Health and Wellbeing Team manage and direct the Youth Council which has a continuing Services Budget of £12,000 per annum. This funding is fully utilised to cover the costs of all training, travel and education expenses for the youth councillors.

3. As with senior District Councillors, all work undertaken by the youth councillors is completed purely on a voluntary basis and the young people give many hours of their time to the training, meetings and projects they support.

4. In light of the lack of absence of any project funding and on the basis that the youth council continues to raise a significant amount of external funding, one of the recommendations of the 2015/16 Youth Engagement Task and Finish Review, was for the Youth Council to receive a project budget of £8,000 from DDF. This would be to supplement the external funding that the youth councillors raise from organisations such as Jack Petchey Foundation and the High Sheriff's Awards. In subsequent years, the Youth Council would then apply for up to £8000 project funding, to develop new projects and further extend existing programmes of work.

5. In 2016/17 the agreed DDF funding of £8,000 was used for the development of an adolescent mental and emotional health and wellbeing project, which was designed directly around concerns raised by local young people. The project was named 'MiLife' by the Youth Council and was developed in conjunction with the Community, Health & Wellbeing Team, North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) and local charity, Red Balloon Family Foundation. The funding was also used for the roll out of the MiLife Project to all local secondary schools in the district, with the support of a contribution of £4000 funding from Essex County Council's Youth Strategy Fund.

6. MiLife was a resounding success from the very first session which was piloted at St. John's School, Epping, and over 4000 young people aged 11-17 took part in the MiLife roadshow in 2016/17. Every year group in the secondary schools received a 50 minute presentation exploring 3 fully interactive drama scenarios and real life stories about young people with mental health problems, and explored how pupils might respond if they found themselves in a similar situation. The feedback from the roadshows clearly demonstrated that young people felt that the sessions helped them to overcome issues of poor mental health stigma and had equipped them with the confidence to help support themselves, their family and friends.

7. All pupils were also signposted to a range of online resources and schools were provided with a teachers pack to continue the conversation within the PSHE curriculum.

Of those who participated, 328 pupils requested follow up support because of things that they could relate to in the sessions and professional support was provided for them. Because of the resounding success of MiLife and the ability of the programme to provide immediate support to young people, all schools have requested further provision of MiLife, on an ongoing basis.

8. With the recruitment of a new cohort of youth councillors in November 2016, it was decided that a DDF request of £5,000 would be made for 2017/18, as this would be a more realistic amount for their first year of operation. This funding was to continue with the excellent work of their predecessors around mental and emotional health, and the development of a range of new work on 'Legal Highs' (Nitrous Oxide) awareness, which is being successfully delivered in schools. The aims of this project are to survey young people in the Epping Forest area to identify the extent of their exposure to drugs and to inform them of the law and legal consequences associated with drug use. The "Say No to N2O" project was officially launched at the Youth Conference on 3rd November 2017 and will run throughout the year.

9. Furthermore, the success of the secondary schools MiLife workshops has led to the development and successful pilot delivery of a Primary School version of MiLife, in partnership with the Red Balloon Family Foundation, who received funding from the Epping Forest Public Health Community Project Fund to develop the scheme. As a result of these pilot sessions, schools requested MiLife also be delivered to Reception pupils, such is the demand and need for emotional health support.

Summary

10. This report therefore seeks Cabinet approval of a DDF allocation of £8,000 funding in the budget 2018/19, for the Youth Council to continue to develop and provide youth-led projects including further development of the MiLife project to all secondary school pupils.

Resource Implications:

Personnel: Officers from the Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Team organise, manage and facilitate the Epping Forest Youth Council work and liaise with partner agencies that may wish to work with EFYC.

EFYC have so far this year secured external funding totalling £3900. This includes
£2,100 from Epping Forest Youth Strategy
£1,500 from the Jack Petchey Foundation
£ 300 from the Think Big O2 Project work.

Legal and Governance Implications:

N/A.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

This report relates wholly to Community Safety.

Consultation Undertaken:

Comprehensive consultation and evaluation of the MiLife programme has been undertaken with schools, including evaluation forms completed by pupils and teachers. Informal feedback is also obtained from partners. EFYC is discussed at EF Youth Council Strategy meetings and partners are also contacted for their comments.

Background Papers:

Corporate Plan Medium Term Aim 3.

Risk Management:

It has been identified that youth nuisance and anti-social behaviour are becoming more prevalent and it is suggested that the MiLife programme may help to prevent some young people from being drawn into this kind of behaviour.

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided at Appendix 1 to this report.