

AGENDA 9, Enc ii) Youth Advisory Committee - Report of the Meeting held on Thursday 11th July, at 5:50pm

PRESENT

Cllr Caroline Ball, Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Matthew Cuthbert, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Cllr Graeme Wright, Sarah Eden, Sharon Parmley

1. AGREE CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

It was AGREED Cllr Caroline Ball would chair the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, everyone in attendance.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest for items on the agenda.

4. DISPENSATIONS

N/A

5. NCC RESPONSE TO STATUTORY DUTY TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE from Graham Reiter, Director for Children, Young People and Families

It was AGREED to receive response, and update following Sarah Eden's approach to NCC and subsequent meeting with Cheryl Wilson.

It was discussed that Nationally, there is a statutory duty for local authorities to secure sufficient educational and recreational activities for young people aged 13-19 (and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties), which was the reason for Sarah's email to Graham Reiter.

In the response received Graham Reiter outlined that Northumberland County Council (NCC) has responded to this duty by restructuring its Early Help service to align with the Family Hubs model. This approach aims to better coordinate services for children and families across the county.

It was discussed that extensive consultations were conducted in 2023 to identify key barriers to youth engagement, including distance/travel time, cost, waiting times, and session timings. Sarah added that this was backed up by Cheryl where the feedback from surveys was not on a lack of things available, but barriers to being able to take part, whether that be for financial reasons or travel.

It was AGREED the group should seek the results of the survey, and in particular responses relevant to Ashington. It was also discussed that surveys often result in the same findings time and again, regardless of the years in between. It was also discussed that it would be useful to be able to answer findings from surveys.

The report identified that NCC has implemented several initiatives:

- Recruited four full-time Young People's Support Workers, one for each locality.
- Developed young people's spaces within Family Hubs where practical.
- Introduced specialist services such as Primary Mental Health Workers and Children's Wellbeing Practitioners.
- Collaborated with other agencies to address issues like anti-social behaviour and youth justice.

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- Piloted parenting support programs like Triple P and SPACE.

It was discussed that the Council's Youth Advisory Committee was set up to bring youth groups together, but that information from NCC and meeting with Cheryl indicated that this is already happening, but that it is in its infancy. The Northumberland VCS Young People's Network has been established to improve collaboration among youth service providers, offering a platform for information sharing and coordinated action. This is Northumberland-wide at present but is likely to have more local break-out groups. It was discussed that Thriving Together is leading on this via Leading Links.

Members recounted previously held LMAPS meetings that everyone was familiar with and believed to be an effective way of sharing information. It is believed that data protection and confidentiality, as well as resource implications may have stopped these meetings. Sarah advised that a similar meeting does exist, attended by professionals supporting and working with young people. Whilst attending these meeting may not be permitted or appropriate, **it was AGREED** that it may be beneficial to receive a redacted report of issues identified as this could highlight areas that the Council may be able support with or direct funding or action towards.

6. OVERVIEW OF YOUTH DELIVERY IN TOWN

Sharon had helpfully put together a list of weekly clubs in the town, not described as exhaustive but those known and shared with the Council. Additionally, information on those activities taking place during the holidays.

The meeting discussed barriers to attendance, not dissimilar to those identified by NCC in surveys, but also due to having to book. It was identified that this is a barrier to young people and families taking up HAF Funded places. The question was posed 'what is the alternative?', as there are several legal considerations and potential risks associated with events or activities where children can simply turn up and join in without prior booking. Sarah discussed that whilst it isn't explicitly illegal, it is something the Council should consider very carefully (Appendix 1 outlines additional information on the Legal Considerations and Risks associated with 'no booking' for events and activities for Young People).

While there may be a perception of gaps in youth provision in Ashington, particularly after 8:00pm and at weekends, significant efforts are underway to get youth providers talking to each other. Also, there may be opportunities for local youth providers to access funding via the lottery winning bid by the Northumberland Youth Network, once the details of it have been shared.

Opportunities for Ashington Town Council to enhance and support these initiatives by engaging with the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network, continuing to publicise available youth services and programs, and exploring commissioned youth activities. **It was AGREED** that the Town Council was not an expert on youth delivery but could make a meaningful contribution to youth activities in Ashington without duplicating existing efforts. This was not expected to be outcome driven targeted youth work, but rather a way for the town council to show and to seek engagement in the Council and in local democracy. This was welcomed, especially as a means of Cllrs engaging with young people and potential attracting the Cllrs of the future.

7. YOUTH SERVICES IN ASHINGTON: PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS

The meeting agreed that this had been discussed in full, and that there were several new initiatives that the Council could take a keen interest in and see how they develop (Appendix 2

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outlines supplementary information about the Council's interest in youth provision and some discussion points for the future).

8. YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

When the Youth Group was set-up, there were two sets of objectives, one for the Youth Collaboration meeting, and another for Ashington Town Council – Youth Forum.

It was AGREED that many of the objectives agreed for the Youth Collaboration meeting are being met by the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network. **It was AGREED** the Town Council could support the network, as we would not wish to work in competition, or to duplicate their work. We can best support by directing VCS groups to join and engage in the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network. We can also use the network as a tool for sharing information, and for seeking information from young people and youth providers, should we wish.

With this in mind, **it was AGREED** to recommend that the Council should go directly to the formation of a Youth Forum, enlisting the support of Ashington members of the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network to seek interest from the young people they engage with, as well as using direct means of engagement via our own media. The Pride Event at Hirst Park in September would be a good opportunity. Also, Sharon highlighted the 'Youth Providers Roadshow' at Dukes Academy and Ashington College, **it was AGREED** these would also provide a good opportunity to speak directly with young people, and to promote the forum.

It was AGREED the Youth Forum would engage as many young people as wished to attend, and therefore the Council should look at holding it at Ashington Community FC, with food. **It was AGREED** the Council Chamber may not be as appealing and may feel too formal in the first instance. It was discussed that those young people 13 and older would not require written parental consent, but those 12 and under would. Wednesday 16th October, commencing at 5:00pm was suggested for the first forum event. **It was AGREED** engagement should be Cllr-led.

It was AGREED the Executive Officer would amend the Terms of Reference to coincide with the proposed course of action, but they would not be significantly different.

9. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

It was AGREED to defer this to a future meeting.

10. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Sarah outlined that timescales were against the Council for agreeing, seeking and publicising anything for the summer holidays. The committee was reminded that any proposal would need to be brought to the next available meeting – Full Council on 30th July, and there would be resource implications in regards this not having been previously planned.

The meeting discussed that an application for holiday activities to be delivered from Hirst Welfare, believed to be directed towards targeted families, was rejected by the Council. In response, discussion centred around the organisation being new to the town, and that it would be helpful to see how things go before directing large amounts of funding towards them. It was discussed that more activities and engagement that is directly associated with the Council would

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be preferred by some members. **It was AGREED** Cllr Caroline Ball could supply contact details for entertainers and those who will provide activities.

It was AGREED to recommend to the Council (to be taken to Full Council Meeting on 30th July) to delegate spending of £2,000 to the Communication and Engagement Officer to commission children's entertainers and/or activities at Tuesday market days throughout the summer holidays. It was **AGREED** to recommend that NCC are asked to support with the provision of two markets stalls.

It was AGREED to recommend to the Council (to be taken to Full Council Meeting on 30th July) to delegate spending of £6,000 to the Youth Advisory Committee, for spending on activities for young people during October half-term, Christmas, and February.

It was AGREED to recommend to the Council (to be taken to Full Council Meeting on 30th July) that the Executive Officer engage with Cramlington Town Council on the possibility of the Council hiring their Youth Bus for any future engagement on the forum, or skate park plans.

11. DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

It was AGREED the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 13th August at 5:00pm. The meeting would look at October half-term and ideas for the Youth Forum as a priority.

ACTIONS

Seek results of Families and YP survey from Cheryl	SE
Promote that groups should join the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network	SP
Ask about Multi-Agency meeting and if ATC can have redacted report	SE
Add items for agreement to Full Council agenda	SE
Send contacts for summer activities on Market Day to Sharon	CB
Make initial enquiries for Tuesday Market activities, and seek NCC support with stalls (in expectation of agreement by Council)	SP
Contact AFC for cost and date for Youth Forum (in expectation of agreement by Council)	SP
Amend Terms of Reference for Youth Advisory Committee	SE

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APPENDIX 1 (Supplementary Information) Legal Considerations and Risks associated with 'no booking' for events and activities for Young People

In the UK, there are several legal considerations and potential risks associated with events or activities where children can simply turn up and join in without prior booking.

Legal considerations:

- √ Safeguarding: UK law requires organisations working with children to have proper safeguarding measures in place. This includes having a safeguarding policy and designated safeguarding leads.
- √ Duty of care: Organisers have a legal duty of care towards participants, especially children.
- √ Health and safety: Events must comply with health and safety regulations.
- √ Insurance: Appropriate public liability insurance is typically required.
- √ Data protection: If collecting any personal information, organisers must comply with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Potential risks:

- Child protection issues: Without pre-registration, it's harder to know who is attending and ensure all adults present are suitable to work with children.
- Overcrowding: Lack of pre-booking can lead to unexpected numbers, potentially exceeding safe capacity limits.
- Inadequate supervision: Without knowing how many children will attend, it's challenging to ensure appropriate adult-to-child ratios.
- Emergency response: In case of an emergency, lack of registration details could make it difficult to account for all children or contact parents/guardians.
- Consent issues: Without prior contact with parents/guardians, obtaining informed consent for activities or photo/video use becomes problematic.
- Age-appropriateness: It may be difficult to ensure all activities are suitable for the age range of children who turn up.
- Special needs accommodation: Without prior information, it's challenging to prepare for children with special needs or medical conditions.
- Liability concerns: In case of accidents or incidents, lack of formal registration could complicate liability issues.

While not explicitly illegal, organisers would need to carefully manage these risks to comply with UK law and ensure children's safety. Implementing some form of on-site registration, even for drop-in events, could help mitigate many of these risks.

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APPENDIX 2 (Supplementary Information - The Town Council's interest in youth provision

Overview

Ashington Town Council has long recognised the importance of supporting and empowering the young people in our community, and the groups that support young people. As a local authority closest to our residents, we are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to the specific needs of Ashington's youth.

The Council's interest stems from a desire to ensure that Ashington's young people have access to high-quality services, activities, and opportunities that support their personal development, well-being, and future prospects, as well as facilitating a conduit for their thoughts, needs and wants to filter through to the Council.

We recognise that investing in our youth is crucial for the long-term vitality and sustainability of our community. However, we also understand the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts and working collaboratively with existing service providers and initiatives.

Youth Forum

Being Cllr-led and actively engaging with young people is important for several reasons. By reaching out to youth, Cllrs demonstrate that they value the perspectives and experiences of all community members, regardless of age. This engagement allows Cllrs to gain fresh insights into local issues and understand the unique challenges and aspirations of younger residents. These interactions can inform decisions and initiatives that better serve the entire community, including our young people.

Additionally, involving youth in local governance encourages an early interest in local government and the democratic process. This exposure can inspire young people to become more politically aware and active, potentially preparing them to become future leaders, councillors, or elected representatives themselves.

Discussion Points: Enhancing Youth Engagement

Ashington Town Council can achieve a balanced and strategic approach by focusing on collaboration, information sharing, and targeted support. The Council can make a significant impact without duplicating existing services or overextending its resources.

Key to the success of any youth-related initiatives will be the ongoing engagement with young people themselves, primarily through the proposed Ashington Youth Forum. This approach ensures that the Council's efforts remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with the actual needs and interests of Ashington's youth.

It is important to recognise that youth provision is a dynamic field, requiring regular review and adaptation. The Town Council should view its role as an evolving one, ready to adjust its approach based on changing needs, emerging opportunities, and ongoing feedback from young people and service providers.

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Engage with Existing Networks:

Actively participate in the Northumberland VCS Young People's Network. Assign a council representative to attend meetings regularly and report back to the Council.

Establish an Ashington Youth Forum:

Create an Ashington Youth Forum, ensuring direct youth representation in local decision-making processes. This forum should meet quarterly and have a clear remit to advise the Council on youth-related matters.

Support Information Dissemination:

Develop a dedicated youth section on the Town Council website, consolidating information about local youth services, activities, and opportunities. Regularly update this resource and promote it through social media channels.

Targeted Financial Support:

Allocate a specific budget for youth initiatives. Consider establishing a youth grant scheme to support local organisations in delivering innovative youth projects that address identified gaps in provision.

Explore Detached Youth Work:

Investigate the feasibility of partnering with Cramlington Town Council to use their detached youth vans for targeted engagement in Ashington, particularly focusing on areas like the skate park.

Youth-Led Community Projects:

Initiate a program that enables young people to design and implement small-scale community improvement projects, fostering civic engagement and local pride.

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PRESS RELEASE As School's Out for Summer, Ashington Town Council Plans to Bring Youth Voices In

19 July 2024

Ashington Town Council is proud to announce the formation of its new Youth Advisory Committee, aimed at amplifying young voices in local governance. The committee's primary focus will be the creation of an Ashington Town Council Youth Forum, designed to engage young people in the democratic process and give them a direct line to influence town council decision-making.

The Youth Advisory Committee will work closely with local youth providers and seek to engage directly with young people across Ashington. This collaborative approach aims to ensure a diverse range of youth perspectives are represented in council discussions and initiatives.

Committee Chair, Councillor Caroline Ball, commented: "We're excited to launch this initiative to bring young people into the heart of local democracy. Our youth are the future of Ashington, and it's crucial that we not only listen to their ideas and concerns but also actively involve them in shaping the town's future. Through the Youth Forum, we hope to inspire a new generation of civic-minded individuals who will contribute to our community for years to come."

If given the go-ahead, the committee plans to host its inaugural meeting of the Youth Forum in October. This informal gathering will provide an opportunity for young people to meet with councillors, share their thoughts, and learn more about local government processes.

The committee is also exploring other engagement opportunities, including activities at the Tuesday Ashington Market during the summer holidays, attendance at schools and colleges, and via other events happening throughout the summer, including the Hirst Family Fun Day on 3rd August, and Pride Picnic in the Park on 7th September. These efforts aim to make local democracy more accessible and relevant to Ashington's youth.

Ashington Town Council is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where young people's voices are heard and valued. The Youth Advisory Committee represents a significant step towards ensuring that the town's future is shaped by those who will inherit it.

The council looks forward to sharing more details following the Full Council meeting on 30th July, where items will be on the agenda for approval.