

AGENDA 11E, Enc ix) Youth Advisory Committee - Proposal to Strengthen Youth Advisory Committee through Partnership with Youth Groups Gathering

Background

Since establishing our Youth Advisory Committee, we are aware that a Youth Groups Gathering has been developing, initiated through Carla Thompson's excellent community engagement work. This gathering aims to bring together local youth organisations and we understand it has aspirations to identify shared priorities and collaborative opportunities.

Strategic Opportunity

Rather than operating in parallel, we have an opportunity to create a more comprehensive and effective approach to youth engagement by working collaboratively with the Youth Groups Gathering.

Rationale for Partnership

Frontline Expertise: Youth groups possess direct, daily experience of young people's needs, challenges, and aspirations. Their insights are invaluable for evidence-based decision-making.

Established Networks: These organisations have existing relationships with diverse youth communities, including those who may be harder to reach through traditional council engagement methods.

Service Delivery Knowledge: They understand current gaps in provision and have practical experience of what works in youth engagement.

Community Credibility: Young people may be more likely to engage through trusted youth organisations than directly with the Council initially.

Alignment with Our Terms of Reference

Several of our stated objectives could be significantly enhanced through partnership:

Youth Forum Establishment (Objective 1): The Youth Groups Gathering could provide the foundation membership and structure for our planned Ashington Youth Forum.

Broader Engagement (Objective 2): Their networks could help us reach underrepresented and disengaged young people more effectively.

Collaborative Projects (Objective 3): Joint working would exemplify our commitment to co-production and ensure projects respond to genuine youth-identified priorities.

Gap Identification (Objective 4): Their service delivery experience, combined with our strategic oversight, could provide comprehensive needs assessment.

Service Promotion (Objective 5): Youth groups are ideally placed to publicise existing programs through their established communication channels.

Enhanced Service Coordination (Objective 6): This combined effort could lead to a clearer understanding of what is available, where to find out what is going on and how to get

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involved and through collaboration secure additional resources to deliver the support and activities that young people want to get involved with.

Proposed Approach

Following liaison with Carla Thompson, to seek interest from groups involved in Youth Groups Gathering to become part of the Youth Advisory Committee, similar to the approach with the Climate and Environment Committee. The rest will follow:

1. **Formal Invitation:** Invite Youth Groups Gathering to nominate representatives to work alongside our committee
2. **Joint Meetings:** Regular combined sessions to ensure aligned priorities and shared information
3. **Co-production Framework:** Develop protocols for joint project development and implementation
4. **Communication Pathways:** Establish clear channels for youth groups to input directly into Council decision-making processes

Benefits for the Council

- Enhanced credibility and effectiveness of our youth engagement
- Access to established networks and expertise
- Improved evidence base for youth-related decisions
- Demonstration of genuine commitment to co-production principles
- More comprehensive approach to addressing youth service gaps

Recommendation

That the Council supports the Youth Advisory Committee's recommendation to pursue formal collaboration with the Youth Groups Gathering. Following initial positive contact with youth groups, to seek authority to take the necessary steps to formalise a new Youth Advisory Group structure that includes non-councillor members, should the youth groups support this collaboration.

This enhanced partnership would strengthen our ability to fulfil our advisory role while respecting the autonomy and expertise of local youth organisations and would align with our Terms of Reference provision for "any required non-councillor members."