

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.30pm on 21 FEBRUARY 2017**

Present: Councillor B Light (in the Chair)
Councillors P Fairhurst, M Felton and B Light

Officers present: P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and
J Starr (Community Officer, Drugs and Alcohol)

YWG22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Lemon.

YWG23 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Light, substituting for Council Lemon who was unable to attend this meeting, welcomed six young people representatives from Saffron Walden County High School to the meeting, as well as Sam Cunningham and Vicky from Essex County Council.

She invited Sam Cunningham to recount his experiences as a former member of Harlow Youth Council and Essex Youth Assembly. Sam gave a very informative account of his time as a member of both of these groups and members asked him questions. He said that the young people engaged in these groups had been encouraged to become involved on a strictly non-party political basis and had received valuable training in public speaking and debating as well as equality and diversity issues.

The youth representatives at Harlow had met regularly with the Council's Chief Executive and had attended local neighbourhood meetings. This had given them a good insight into how the council operated.

Harlow had 12 youth council members initially and this had expanded after the first year with a two year term of office.

Councillor Fairhurst said that his aim was to achieve an active and vital youth body able to input their ideas into the work of the district council rather than becoming a token talking shop. He challenged the young people present to comment specifically on the Local Plan and other contentious matters under active consideration by Uttlesford and the young people responded to this challenge in a positive fashion, prompting much animated debate.

While being pleased with the positive response from pupils at the County High School, members expressed disappointment with the lack of representation from other schools in the district. John Starr said he recognised the challenge involved in widening membership from other parts of the district. His view was that the Council should accept the young people attending the initial meeting as being those who wanted to be involved and not be too concerned about areas not immediately represented.

The young people from Saffron Walden commented that they would be attending university from September and would therefore be unlikely to be involved in the youth council when it was first established.

There was extensive discussion about the process for electing or selecting the initial youth council members. One of the CHS representatives suggested it would be helpful for councillors to visit the school to introduce the candidates for the first youth council election. Councillor Fairhurst proposed a councillor mentor at each school to help facilitate the process and keep the links between the schools and the Council active.

Councillor Light suggested a poster should be produced publicising the election process and John Starr agreed this would be feasible.

A number of other suggestions were discussed and the Essex County representatives proposed offering a range of training opportunities for the young people sitting on the initial Uttlesford Youth Council including presentation skills and public speaking. Vicky offered to facilitate that process.

In conclusion, the meeting agreed to proceed with school visits to encourage participation in the election of young people to the youth council and that a general invitation should be given to all schools to send representatives to the first planned meeting on Saturday 15 March at the Uttlesford Council Offices.

The intention was to arrange for the election or nomination of at least 15 youth representatives from local schools on the basis of two or three places each, plus an additional three places allocated to young people from within the general community in Uttlesford.

Where needed, ballot boxes and ballot papers would be provided for use in organising the first election.

After the initial meeting had taken place, progress would be reported back to the Council meeting on 4 April and all youth representatives would be invited to attend that meeting to give their feedback and general impressions.

Councillor Light thanked everyone concerned for attending and then closed the meeting at 7.55pm.