

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.30pm on 15 MARCH  
2017**

Present: Councillor M Lemon (Chairman)  
Councillors P Fairhurst and B Light

Officers present: B Ferguson (Democratic Services Officer) and J Starr  
(Community Officer, Drugs and Alcohol)

**YWG24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Felton.

*Councillor Fairhurst declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council.*

**YWG25 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 January 2017 and 21 February 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**YWG26 TO CONSIDER FURTHER ARRANGEMENTS TO ESTABLISH A YOUTH COUNCIL IN UTTLESFORD PRIOR TO THE FIRST PLANNED MEETING ON 18 MARCH 2017**

The Chairman welcomed a strong contingent of young people representatives from Saffron Walden County High School and Walden School, as well as introducing members, officers and Sam Cunningham from Essex County Council. He said much had yet to be decided for the first meeting on Saturday 18 March, including a definitive number of young councillors, but was pleased with the turn-out and enthusiasm for an Uttlesford District Youth Council.

The Community Officer updated members on the progress made since the last meeting. He welcomed the new participants from both the Saffron Walden County High School and Walden School and summarised the success of members visiting local schools to generate interest and involvement from local young people. All schools in the area that had been contacted had responded except Felsted. Forest Hall School had been a particular success with thirty-six young people opting to stand for election to the Uttlesford Youth Council. Six people would be elected by the school on Friday and would represent their district on Saturday's first meeting. The Community Officer said success had been limited in the Dunmow and Joyce Franklyn Schools and more work would be needed to generate further participation.

Members, officers and the young representatives present discussed issues surrounding Saturday's first meeting and the practical development of the Youth Council. The Community Officer stressed the importance of keeping

the process inclusive so that all who wanted to attend could get involved. The Chairman said the young representatives, not members of the full Council, must be the driving force behind the Youth Council and commitment and participation would be key to its success.

Councillor Fairhurst agreed the Youth Council must be driven by the young but full Council members would be on hand to support young councillors as mentors. Constitutional and Council processes were examples where Councillors' experience would be of value to the Youth Council.

Practical aspects surrounding the establishment of a Youth Council were discussed with the Chairman urging the young representatives to think about what issues mattered to them. Councillor Light said she was surprised by the topics the Councillors had encountered in schools with bus services being a particularly important issue for the young people they had met.

Councillor Fairhurst suggested a constitution from an existing Youth Council, with links to Essex County Council, should be available for reference at Saturday's meeting and John Starr thought this would be a good idea. Sam Cunningham was invited to share his experience of the various youth councils he's been involved with. He explained there were similarities between youth constitutions across Essex and there was scope for the Uttlesford Youth Council to follow suit.

Councillor Light asked the room if a programme could be decided for Saturday. Councillor Fairhurst summarised the meeting's position by saying Saturday would be a 'dry-run' and by the end of the first meeting a 'pilot' Youth Council would be established that would develop along the lines of a working group. It was agreed that the outcome was not perfect as many young councillors who attend on Saturday would have yet to be elected. However, this first group would establish a working Youth Council so that those who follow in the years to come would be involved in a truly democratic process.

To assist the young representatives, Councillor Fairhurst asked Sam Cunningham to provide existing agendas, standing orders and constitutions from other Youth Councils in Essex, to give them an idea of how to structure their institution and how to practically run a meeting. The legitimacy of the Youth Council was mentioned by councillors and officers alike and Councillor Fairhurst stressed the importance of structure in creating legitimacy. All present agreed that if the council was not taken seriously it would be a pointless exercise.

The Chairman emphasised the importance of communication between the full and youth councils to ensure the Youth Council was taken seriously. Councillor Fairhurst said decisions of the Youth Council could be brought to full members who in turn would present such motions to the full council. The Chairman suggested that a full member of the Council should be chosen to represent the Youth Council to keep communication lines open. Both Councillors Light and Fairhurst agreed.

A number of questions were fielded regarding a capped-limit on the number of Youth Councillors for the district. The Community Officer stated that a strong and large pool of young people would be the most important factors bearing consideration. The young representatives agreed that inclusivity and participation would be the most important factors to them.

To facilitate participation, the Community Officer suggested setting up a group email where all those involved can communicate. The Chairman reinforced this by reminding the young representatives that email addresses would be needed on Saturday.

An agenda for the Saturday meeting was discussed but Councillor Fairhurst advised that only a basic agenda was required. However, he did state that in future meetings a well-researched agenda would be prepared. In response to a question from the Chairman, John Starr agreed to collate ideas from the Youth Council to draft an agenda for Saturday.

For the purpose of Saturday, Item 1 would be a general introduction. Both Councillors Light and Fairhurst asked the young representatives to think about why a Youth Council was important to them. Item 2 on the agenda would be to debate the constitution with particular reference to Harlow's youth council's constitution to see if that model is appropriate. The Chairman and Community Officer also offered reassurance to the young representatives by saying the constitution is a work in progress and the choices made on Saturday are not set in stone.

Refreshments were agreed upon and a time-limit for the meeting was set between 10:00-12:30 with a break at 11:00.

Councillor Fairhurst said the most important achievement on Saturday was to establish a legitimate Youth Council before presenting the young representatives before the full council on 4 April.

Chairman Lemon raised the issue of resources and asked Sam how other Youth Councils worked across the county. Sam stated that all the Youth Councils he had worked with are serviced by full-time council staff. The Chairman and members all agreed this is important and would discuss resources at the next working group.

The Community Officer said a report on the establishment of the Youth Council would be submitted on 27 March and requested ideas from the young representatives that should be included in the report.

Councillor Lemon thanked everyone concerned for attending.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm.