

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.30pm on 23 MAY 2017**

Present: Councillor M Lemon (Chairman)  
Councillors M Felton, B Light, J Redfern

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

Also present: Sam Cunningham (Essex County Council, Youth Officer)

**PWG1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean and Fairhurst.

**PWG2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**PWG3 MINUTE SILENCE**

The Chairman asked those present to observe a minute's silence in tribute to the victims of the Manchester terror attack.

**PWG4 UPDATE ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Community Officer said the previous meeting had been held in a youth club in Great Dunmow and the venue had been unsuitable and unaccommodating. The next Youth Council would be held in the first week of June and more suitable venues would be required for future meetings.

Councillor Light said a more formal venue was necessary, to mimic the workings of a Full Council more closely. The Chairman said it was a good idea to hold the meetings across the district. In response to a question from Councillor Light, the Community Officer said transport could be arranged for the young members provided that the Youth Council was hosted in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow or Stansted.

The Group discussed the Youth Council meeting held on 2 May 2017. The Community Officer said the meeting did not proceed past item 2 on the agenda, and was mainly taken up with discussions regarding the Constitutional workings of the Youth Council. A good turnout had been recorded, with 15 young people attending.

Councillor Light said the Youth Council had been interested in a number of areas and had established working groups for Mental Health, Transport and Communication.

The Community Officer said the Mental Health Working Group had already met. They had organised the meeting and taken the minutes themselves. A meeting had been arranged with the Communication Manager at Uttlesford District Council, to explore how the Youth Council would communicate with the wider world.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Councillor Light said they were using Harlow's Youth Council Constitution as a working document but this would be amended as time progressed.

Councillor Felton said the Youth Council should be encouraged to approach this working group when they felt they needed something actioned by Full Council. The Chairman added that the youth council meetings should be fully run by the Youth Council, with little interference from members, although, when appropriate, full members could be invited.

The Community Officer said there was still much work to do with regards to the practical workings of the Youth Council. How the Youth Council interacted with the Full Council, how they minute and circulate information and how they kept in touch with each other were all matters that would become clearer as time and the project progressed.

The Chairman said a feedback system would be needed to ensure the Youth Council were heard by the Full Council when required. Councillor Light said a mentoring programme could still be adopted and asked if there would be any training provided for the young members. Sam Cunningham said he would talk to the young members to ascertain what skills they felt were needed. Councillor Felton said 'life skills' training would be of value to young members as it would give them something useful that they could take away and use in the wider world.

With regards to member involvement in the Youth Council, Councillor Light said whilst the Youth Council should be run independently of members, they would also need to reconnect with Full Council in order to have their views heard by members. The Chairman agreed, although he did want the Youth Council to work as independently as possible. Councillor Redfern said it was possible for a standing item to be established at Full Council, to give young members a platform to talk about the Youth Council. This would not be arbitrary and they would only have to present to Full Council if they wanted to. When the Youth Council had established a range of working groups, Cabinet members with a portfolio could attend at the request of the young members, to offer their relevant advice and experience. It was agreed to circulate the Cabinet member list to members of the Youth Council.

With regards to recruitment, the Community Officer said he had recruited one member from the Respect Project although they were still relying on

schools for the majority of young members. Councillor Felton spoke of Felsted Parish Council where a young person was elected to represent the interests of the parish's youth. The Community Officer said he had written to parish clerks and had offered funding for similar projects but no responses were received. Councillor Redfern suggested he copy in the relevant district councillors in future, to help elicit a reply.

PWG5

## **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

The Chairman told members the Working Group had a new title and new Terms of Reference would be required. Previously known as the Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG), it would now be known as the Public Engagement Working Group and would have a wider remit. He confirmed he had spoken to the Chief Executive and youth engagement would still play a significant part in the workings of the group. He told members he would like the current Community Officer to continue working with the group, even though the remit had changed. The Chairman added that future arrangements would be confirmed with the Chief Executive after the Parliamentary Election on 8 June.

The Chairman said the YEWG had been a success. To establish a Youth Council was a difficult endeavour, one which had failed to materialise in past attempts, and yet this Working Group had succeeded. For this reason the Group had been asked to carry over this success with wider public engagement.

Previous iterations of public engagement included the Uttlesford North and South forums. These had been stopped due to a lack of public interest. The Chairman added that something new had to be created and welcomed ideas from members.

Councillor Felton said it was important that the group understood how the Council was already engaging with the public. The Community Officer told members of a scheme where community workers knocked on doors and offered a variety of services to council tenants (e.g. maintenance, fire safety advice). This also gave community workers a chance to listen to problems raised by the public that perhaps would not come to light within a formal public engagement forum.

The Chairman asked members to think about how the group could interact with the public. It was important that the public's views were taken into account when establishing new forms of engagement. Social media, member bulletins and newspaper advertisements were all potential ways of accumulating ideas from the wider public.

The meeting ended 7.30pm