

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held in the COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.30pm on 19 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Present: Councillor M Lemon (Chairman) and B Light

Officers present: R Auty (Assistant Director – Corporate Services), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Officer), P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and J Starr (Community Officer - Drugs and Alcohol)

Also present: Charles Yallup (Uttlesford District Youth Councillor)

PWG6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean and Fairhurst.

PWG7 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**PWG8 CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT YOUTH CONSTITUTION FOR
RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL**

The Working Group discussed the draft Youth Constitution, which had been put before Members for comment before recommendation to Full Council. The amended document has been appended to the Minutes.

Eligibility

The Community Officer asked if the eligibility criteria should be extended to 13-19 year olds who worked in the District. The Democratic and Electoral Services manager said this would be in line with Full Council policy and Members agreed to approve the amendment.

Election Pools

Members discussed the number of seats on the Youth Council and the equation on which these were allocated. Councillor Light asked if the number of students attending Felsted School had been verified. The Community Officer said he was having difficulty contacting the school and was still waiting on a response to his enquiry. The Youth Councillor said he had found an estimated figure of 1000 but he would attempt to reach out to the school in the remaining time he had left on the Youth Council.

Election

The Community Officer said the requirement that elections take place on a Thursday in October or November would be inflexible and cause practical problems. The Youth Councillor said the stipulation of a set election period provided a clear timeframe which would help schools plan for the elections. He added that the Youth Council would be in dialogue with schools to minimise disruption. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said a two week period should be specified and Members agreed as this gave a set period which provided certainty but allowed schools a degree of flexibility.

Members discussed the voting eligibility for the Youth Council. The Community Officer said that whilst candidates were required to be 13 years or older, he could see no good reason why all secondary school children could not vote from a constitutional perspective. The Youth Councillor agreed as it reinforced the inclusive spirit of the Youth Council and its Constitution.

Meetings

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said the Youth Council would be a semi-official body of Uttlesford District Council and careful consideration needed to be given to the publishing of meeting documents and the publicising of meetings. He asked specifically if parental consent would be required from the Youth Members. The Community Officer said a system could be put in place where consent forms were distributed to all Youth Members at the beginning of the Council term, to ensure all statutory requirements were fulfilled. The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said the Audit Manager would be able to provide the necessary forms.

In response to a question from the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, the Community Officer said the Youth Council would be incorporated in to CMIS, the Council's Meeting Management system, but only in terms of Full Youth Council meetings. To date, the Working Groups had been run by the Youth Members with no input from Officers and they would continue to do so.

Councillor Light asked why items for an agenda had to be approved by the Chairman. The Youth Councillor said this was due to the need to prioritise items to make a meeting manageable. In the past, Youth Council Members had corresponded via WhatsApp to gain a consensus on meeting items but it was the Chairman who compiled the final agenda. Members agreed there would be a need for officer involvement if this process was to be formalised, and clear timeframes had to be put in place. The Community Officer said he would act as a conduit between Democratic Services and the Youth Council, and would prompt Youth Members for agenda items before relaying the information to Democratic Services so they could publish online.

Chairman

The Community Officer was concerned that the 6 month term stated in the Constitution was too short. Members agreed that a year would be a more suitable term for Chairman.

Financial Matters

The Chairman said the section relating to financial support for the Youth Council was unsatisfactory as it did not secure ongoing financial support for the project. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager added that there was no need to define this in the Constitution, but there would be a need to outline financial support in the report that would accompany the Constitution at full Council. The Assistant Director – Corporate Services asked the Community Officer to ascertain the cost of the Youth Council for the past year so a figure could be given when Members discussed the proposal. The Community Officer said £3,500 had been secured from existing budgets but he would outline the financial support required in his report to Full Council.

Members agreed to omit the Financial Matters section from the Constitution.

PWG9

ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

The Chairman thanked everyone involved in the Youth Council for all of their hard work. He thanked the Community Officer in particular for his invaluable input and praised the Youth Members for their dedication and commitment. The Youth Council had been a great success and he was proud of the young people for their achievement.

Going forward, the Working Group would direct its attention to wider public engagement and the Assistant Director – Corporate Services was welcomed as the new lead officer. Whilst the Working Group would not be focused on Youth Engagement, he hoped that collaboration with the Youth Council would continue.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said Terms of Reference would need to be established for the Public Engagement Working Group and he had arranged a meeting with the Chairman and Councillor Light to discuss this. Although there would be a hiatus before the next meeting, he hoped one could be scheduled before Christmas.

The meeting ended at 08:15pm.