

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Youth Services Working Group Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams At 3.30pm on Thursday 18 November 2021

PRESENT

Councillors P Moseley (Chair), E Roberts and D Vasmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Tash Dews (Alternative Curriculum), Adam Purnell (Youth and Community Manager), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources - RFO), Helena Williams (Shropshire Council), Sian Makin (Shropshire Council) Michelle Farmer (Committee Clerk)

22/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors C Lemon and B Bentick.

23/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY & NON-PECUNIARY) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	Those twin-hatted members declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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24/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST WORKING GROUP MEETING

To approve the minutes of the Working Group meeting held on 15 September 2021 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Youth Working Group held on 15 September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

25/21 OUTREACH IN THE QUARRY

Sian Makin, Area Youth Worker at Shropshire Council, outlined a project that the Youth Support Team at Shropshire Council had been engaged with. Through the Team Shrewsbury meetings hosted by Shrewsbury Town Council, concerns were raised regarding young people's behaviour in the Quarry. Security had been contracted by the Town Council to work evenings and weekends to ensure that the park continued to be a nice place for all to attend. The Youth Support Team suggested that with a multi-agency approach, professionals could engage with young people in the park over the summer 2021 holiday.

The aim of the project was to engage with young people aged 13+ and have conversations about reducing harm, making sure young people's voices are heard and that they were signposted to, or had access to, a number of agencies if they needed them. They provided basic food for young people who may be in receipt of school meals (through Holiday Activities Fund) and arranged small group activities (if young people want to). There was no advertising of the work as the team didn't want to encourage more people to use the park in groups. Any safeguarding issues were also recorded.

Several organisations were involved in the project which included Shropshire Council Youth Support Team, Shrewsbury Town Council Youth Service, We Are With You, School Nurse Youth Workers, Climb Project, Shrewsbury Academy pastoral team member, Shropshire Council Exploitation Lead and Meole Brace Holy Trinity Church.

Sian stated that the Outreach sessions were held over 19 days (44 hours in total), during the afternoons and evenings. Out of the sessions, 491 contacts were made (these were the recorded ones, however there were more). The outreach team introduced themselves to Police, PCSO's and the security team when there was an opportunity. It was recorded that young people mainly lived in Shrewsbury. Young people also came from Telford, Whitchurch, Wem, Welshpool, Llanfair Caereinion, Llanidloes and a couple of larger groups from all over the country staying in Shrewsbury on residential trips. The main groups that engaged with the outreach team were students attending Meole Brace (138 contacts) and 6th form or college students (128). These young people made up the 2 groups that were seen consistently over the summer. The park was used by a large number of Meole Brace and The Priory students to meet up.

The topics of conversation with young people included; water safety, keeping each other safe, litter, A Level and GCSE results, plans for the future, lack of things to do socially, lack of affordable and available public transport, drugs and alcohol, young people not feeling listened to, work, housing, school/college and the relationship they had with police and security. Overall, young people were welcoming of the professionals when they were approached. A couple of the professionals also took litter picks and bags out. This was a good conversation starter with the young people- with some of them asking to use the picks themselves during the sessions. Young people appreciated the food and drink given, with very little waste at the end of each session. Many of the young people were in the park for long periods of time with no food or drink.

The findings from the Outreach session were that Young people were generally using the space in an appropriate way. There were different schools mixing in the park; a common meeting place for young people who live in different areas. Young people generally had a good relationship with the security in the park and had appreciated them being around. The outreach team did not witness a huge amount of substance misuse. Young people were mainly aged 15+. Feedback gained from young people was that they didn't find information on Criminal Exploitation useful. They said people 'go on about it too much' and it makes them 'shut off'. One of the young women said that they had enjoyed talking to members of the team and it was nice to be listened to. Sian also highlighted some areas of development for future outreach work. These included;

- A meeting for all those involved in the work prior to starting the project, to produce a working agreement.
- The SC team to coordinate with the Quarry events calendar when scheduling sessions so that events in the park don't impact on sessions with young people (young people have less space when events are on).
- Gaining additional funding to employ casual youth support workers to do evening sessions.

- Gaining additional funding for a weekly organised activity that the young people are invited to join in with e.g. art, music, sports. Also, the possibility of working with local businesses to see what support they can give as young people commented that they had nothing else to do but hang around the Quarry
- Working with the Town Council to keep a stock of food and drink in the park building so it would be easier for professionals to hand out the food and drink around the park.

Members thanked Sian and Helena for their report commenting that it was very useful to hear their findings. It was stated that there was a need to raise the profile of Youth Work as there is a short supply of Youth workers at present and the aim is to appoint more casual youth workers by Easter.

26/21 UPDATE ON YOUTH ACTIVITY DURING THE AUTUMN TERM

The Youth and Community Manager reported that it was a slow start for the open access youth provision, having not been running at full capacity for the best part of 18 months beforehand due to Covid-19.

He explained that he had been working with years 7, 8 and 9 students at both Belvidere and Shrewsbury Academy to advertise the sessions and, as a result, numbers attending are starting to increase. The team hadn't yet visited Priory and Meole Brace schools as there currently isn't any provision on that side of town. As the service develops, the hope is that this will change, and that ways will be found to offer more in these areas.

Attendance at Monkmoor appears to be back on track with attendance numbers rising each week. The football sessions also held at Monkmoor are proving very popular with high attendance figures recorded each week. Both pitches at Monkmoor are being used and Adam wished to thank Dave Pharo at Monkmoor Recreation Ground for the assistance he has provided during the sessions. Youth Workers have been able to recruit new members off the back of the football sessions. The other sessions held at Sundorne and the Grange are also starting to increase in numbers and in general staff are happy with the way it is progressing.

The Youth and Community Manager also provided the Committee with an update on the Kynaston Road Community Centre. The centre has now established a committee that is meeting regularly and working to tick off all the things that are needed to fully reopen. They have managed to secure funding to fix the windows, boiler and cooker in the kitchen, and work is either underway or scheduled to take place. There is still a lack of furniture and certain equipment, but insurance is in place and there are a couple of groups now hiring the space for specific activities. It is hoped that the centre will be fully open by the end of 2021. He commented that this is a huge positive for the area, and a facility that Shrewsbury Town Council should consider for youth and community work delivery going forward.

Shrewsbury School of Boxing have not yet moved out of their location within the old Shrewsbury Academy site and they hope to remain there for a little while yet. They have taken on young people who we have referred to them still, despite us not yet supporting them financially. This will continue until they are forced to move on.

The Youth and Community Manager then went on to talk about a proposed 'Enter Hospitality' initiative. He explained that the Youth Services is experiencing an ever-increasing number of young people who find themselves permanently excluded from school. Often, this is down to the individual not being particularly academic, and not finding it easy to get along with an ever-increasing need for schools to achieve results in academic areas. Independent restaurants had been approached by the

team to discuss developing a programme to support young people who did not get on with mainstream education, into the industry. Initially, they would be looking specifically at enrolling young people who have been permanently excluded to take part in a programme during their transition period between placements that would see them spend a week in a participating restaurant, giving them a varied insight into what it's like to work in the industry, and an experience of different settings and roles. The idea being that should the young person get on particularly well in one of the settings, they could then be offered some part time work and therefore a door opened for them into a career. He explained that this initiative links directly with the alternative curriculum programme and, once up and running, has the potential to not only widen our offer to young people but could also become a healthy income stream to provide some sustainability and capital to grow the service. Young people who are permanently excluded from school have six days before the local authority have a legal obligation to find them provision whilst out of school in their transition between placements. There is funding attached to these young people for this, but there are simply no places or organisations locally offering suitable provision. By facilitating the proposed programme, they hope to be able to tap into this funding whilst also developing an innovative, problem solving, forward thinking provision for young people and local businesses.

The Town Clerk asked if there had been a business case put together for this proposed initiative and how much staff and resources would be needed. Concerns were raised that the Town Council would not have the financial ability to cover it. The business case would need to be presented at the next Finance & General purposes Committee due to the current budget planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) The note the contents of the report.
- ii) That the proposals for a costed business case can be developed regarding a hospitality placement programme and an increase in staffing to provide additional alternative curriculum provision. These proposals are to be presented for consideration at the next meeting of Finance & General Purposes.

27/21 ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM WORK

The Alternative Curriculum Officer provided an update on the Alternative Curriculum Project reporting the current number of Young People on the role was 22. The Alternative Curriculum Officer had provided a report to the Committee which showed a break down for each individual young person (anonymously) to give the committee a better idea of what they are working with.

Currently they are running seven half day sessions across the week. There is a larger demand for the service but, due to the intensive resource required, numbers are restricted. Each session is now limited to 5 or 6 young people. The Youth and Community Manager stated that if we are looking to develop the service and expand the work in this area then he would recommend increasing the number of staff who work the AC to allow for 3 per session. Communication has also been received from various schools stating they are desperate for places but there are no provisions and no capacity to cover the demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the contents of the report are noted and that any additional need for resources are included into the business case above.

28/21 PLANS FOR YOUTH ACTIVITY FOR THE AUTUMN/WINTER

This matter item was discussed under item 26/21.

29/21 UPDATE ON THE YOUTH BUDGET

The Head of Resources provided a summary of the Youth budget stating that looking at the current figures, there are overspends but this was down to the music grant and Shropshire Summer activities, so overall, we are on budget. The group were provided with year to date figures compared to budget and with the previous two years for comparison. He commented that as discussed at the last meeting, due to grants received and subsequent expenditure, this can make variances misleading.

The Head of Resources commented that when the 2022/23 budget is set and we are in the new financial year, a separate cost centre for AC work and grants will be set up for easier monitoring and reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the contents of the report are noted.

30/21 FUTURE OF THE YOUTH SERVICE

The Youth and Community Manager agreed to meet with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Head of Resources to discuss the budget for the proposed hospitality project. The Town Clerk also commented that this would be a good opportunity to hold a visioning exercise with Committee Members regarding Youth Services, going forward.

31/21 STAFFING

Members were informed that the current job vacancy for the Youth and Community Manager was now being advertised. The closing date for applications will be Friday 3 December 2021 and interviews would be held on 16 December 2021. The aim is that the new member of staff would be in place by the new year.

Members also took the opportunity to thank Adam for all the work he has done whilst being in the role and he would be greatly missed.

32/21 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Youth Services Working Group is Thursday 20 January 2022.