

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
14 June 2021**

Officer: Adam Purnell – Youth and Community Manager

Proposal to Support the Provision of Boxing for Young People

Purpose of Report

To consider a proposal for the provision of boxing for the young people of Shrewsbury in conjunction with Youth Services.

Introduction

We have been in discussions with Shrewsbury School of Boxing about providing weekly boxing coaching to around 30 young people on behalf of Young Shrewsbury each week in order to enhance the current youth sessions we already run. Shrewsbury School of Boxing currently offer two beginners sessions each week on a Wednesday evening from 7.00 – 8.00pm and 8.00 – 9.00pm and the plan would be for the Young Shrewsbury sponsored young people to join these existing classes.

Rationale

The Shrewsbury School of Boxing will hopefully be relocating from the Grange to opposite the Tesco Express in Ditherington. This is one of the areas of the highest need for youth support in the town, with the added benefit of being accessible by foot or public transport from the town centre. We have been working with SCOB for around 18 months now, after they approached the service looking for space to move to having outgrown the gym that they were in. With a high volumes of juniors already, the club which is entirely voluntarily ran by two coaches, Sam and Paul is the only amateur boxing club in Shrewsbury and is growing in popularity all of the time, and has been particularly popular with our hardest to engage young people.

Up until now the club has offered our service (Young Shrewsbury) free spaces for our young people, after we were lucky enough to be able to secure them a much larger space for the gym within the old Grange school at no cost after convincing the previous head teacher that it would be of huge benefit to the local young people and community. The club agreed that they would offer up to 15 young people a free session a week as a result of being given free rent, and more space than they had meant that they were able to accommodate and wanted to encourage new junior members. Some of our hardest to reach young people have been attending ever since, but unfortunately recently the club have been told by the school that they have to leave the space in the old Grange school by July, and so now have been looking at new venues with very little notice.

The venue that they are hoping to move to is in Ditherington on the main road, and in a prime location not only for lots of the young people we work with to be able to continue to attend, but is likely to attract others who live in the area who have expressed an interest in attending but have not been able to travel out to Harlescott. It is also central enough that detached workers, Alternative curriculum and open access youth club staff will be able to divert our young people from all over town to attend, as it is accessible from the centre on foot if necessary. We have already seen the benefits that these sessions have had with those young people who attend but spaces have been limited so we have not been able to make the offer more widely available, but this new offer may make it much more universal.

Unfortunately, this venue doesn't come for free and whilst the club have been given a big discount, rent of the building is still £12k per year, which they simply cannot afford without financial support. So the club wouldn't be able to continue to offer our young people a session for free, as they now have to somehow find a substantial amount of extra money to pay the rent and continue to operate. This is a bit of a make or break situation for the club, with venues that are affordable to an voluntary organisation are few and far between, particularly when a permanent space is needed due to the boxing ring being a permanent fixture and sessions running 4 days a week, with a view to offer even more in the new venue should it go ahead.

The club have struggled for so long now to find a permanent home, and whilst the free venue at Grange bought them some time it was inevitable that they would eventually have to leave. This is an opportunity for the club to become an institution in the middle of the town, and offer a really positive, disciplined activity for young people and the wider community. We have developed a great working relationship so far, and so now would like to expand on this and work more closely with the club and support them to take things to the next level for the benefit of everyone.

Offer

- 30 sponsored weekly places across two sessions on a Wednesday evening. Sessions run throughout the year only breaking at Easter and Christmas.
- After five sessions, young people will be issued with their own gloves, water bottle and skipping rope once they have shown a level of commitment to sticking with the sport. Young people who progress well will be offered sponsored places and support in the intermediate classes and will have the opportunity to be taken right through to Amateur level if they display ability.
- Youth workers will support the session on a semi-detached basis, following our 'Sport and Support' Model which is very successful with 5 a side football, and is not dissimilar to the way that Flaxivity ran, when skate ramps were the main draw for the young people.
- Young Shrewsbury Alternative Curriculum staff would have access to the gym for daytime sessions if a boxing coach is provided (details of this to be finalised if we go ahead)

Costs

In order to support the boxing provision, Shrewsbury Town Council would need to commit £6000 per year. This would be offset against the costs previously allocated to Flaxivity which are no longer being used.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) The report be noted.
- (ii) That the expenditure be approved.