

EXECUTIVE**6 SEPTEMBER 2007****GUILDFORD YOUTH COUNCIL – PROGRESS REPORT****SUMMARY**

Established in 1996, Guildford Youth Council continues to provide an important forum for young people in the Borough. This report sets out briefly the background of the Youth Council and details its progress and activities during the past year.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Youth Council is composed of young people between 13 and 19 years of age who have, where possible, been democratically elected by other young people from within their respective organisations. The Youth Council now meets formally on at least ten occasions a year, usually at the Council offices, to discuss youth issues and often welcomes guest speakers to its meetings.
- 1.2 The Youth Council is supported by the Council and the Surrey Youth Service. The Council currently provides a grant of £3,000 per annum towards Youth Council projects and a further £3,000 for administration costs and training. Surrey Youth Service employs a part-time Co-ordinator to assist at Youth Council meetings and facilitate project ideas. The Council provides administrative support through the Democratic Services Unit and general support from the Play and Youth Officer, and both organisations provide additional “help in kind”.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Members may recall that the Youth Council has previously reported that it had experienced difficulties in recruiting. However, since the appointment of Kerry Sexton to the post of Co-ordinator during 2005, membership has increased considerably and currently stands at 28.
- 2.2 A recruitment drive is continuing and discussions are ongoing with other schools and youth organisations about potential membership. The Youth Council is also proposing to hold meetings in various locations in the Borough and is continuing to explore alternative methods of communication with schools and groups.

3. CONSULTATIVE ROLE OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL

- 3.1 As in previous years, the Youth Council is continuing to develop its role as a consultative body for initiatives being progressed by local organisations. The Council is seeking to enhance this role and the views of the Youth Council are sought on an increasing number of relevant committee reports and other important issues affecting young people. Over the past year, the Youth Council has been consulted on a number of projects being developed by the Council including those listed under the following headings:-
- Art, Play & Sport Grants and Youth and Community & Youth Project Grants.
 - Facilities for Young People
 - Communication with Young People

- Guildford Town Centre Action Plan
- Possible closure of Stoughton and Bellfields Youth & Community Centres
- Guildford Cultural Strategy
- Replacement for the Civic Hall

The Youth Council also received presentations on the preparation and opportunities for involvement in the 2012 Olympic Games and from the Council's Environmental team in relation to climate change and energy saving.

- 3.2 In addition to attendance at the formal Youth Council meetings, its members represent the Youth Council on local and national groups, including the Local Strategic Partnership, the British Youth Council and the Surrey Youth Parliament. Chairperson, Scarlett Benson, has also recently been appointed to serve on the European Youth Parliament and the Youth Council continues to establish working links with "Connexions", set up to provide advice to young people. It is also establishing links with the Guildford Local Committee and issues identified for future discussion include Youth Service Facilities and Relationships with Older People.

4. YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FUND/YOUTH CAPITAL FUND

- 4.1 As part of the Government's 'Every Child Matters' programme, new funds were made available, via Surrey County Council, for young people in Surrey to spend on activities and projects.
- 4.2 The Youth Opportunities Fund gives young people more control and choice over the youth activities and facilities that are available in their area and the Youth Capital Fund gives young people more control and choice in improving community facilities. In its first year of operation Guildford Youth Council was responsible for the allocation of grants of £35,000 from the Youth Opportunities Fund and £30,000 from the Youth Capital Fund through its Guildford Awards Panel.
- 4.3 Eight Youth Council members attended a training course, which enabled them to become eligible for membership of the first Guildford Awards Panel. The Panel met on three occasions and considered applications for grant aid from 15 local organisations. Funding has now been allocated for the 2007/08 financial year and further meetings of the Panel are currently being arranged to consider applications for grant assistance.

5. TRAINING

- 5.1 In addition to the training course organised in connection with the Youth Opportunities Fund, Youth Council members attended a residential course organised by the British Youth Council, which provided training in team building, behaviour and self-confidence.
- 5.2 Two Youth Council Members have also attended briefing sessions organised by the Council for newly elected councillors and a briefing session for Council staff in relation to duties at polling stations. They also assisted with the counting of votes at the Council elections held in May.
- 5.3 The Youth Council is currently planning exchange visits with other Youth Councils and discussing the possibility of staging a joint training event.

6. CURRENT PROJECTS

- 6.1 **Battle of Bands Contest.** Following the success of last year's event, the Youth Council has again organised a Battle of the Bands contest to showcase local music talent. Two heats and two semi finals were held in July and the final was held at the Electric Theatre on 30 August. Local sponsorship has been obtained and 13 bands competed.
- 6.2 **Joint Venture with Youth Offending Team (RAMPAGE).** To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Guildford Skateboard Park, Guildford Youth Council supported the Matrix Trust in the organisation of the event, both with sponsorship and assistance with the event staged on 1 July.

7. FUTURE PROJECTS/EVENTS

- 7.1 The Youth Council is currently considering a programme of future projects for its Members during 2007/08. These include:-
- Website development - to continue to develop the Youth Council site in liaison with the Council's Web Team.
 - Visiting other youth councils to exchange information and ideas.
 - Organise joint training day with other youth councils (to include team building and public speaking).
 - Recruitment and publicity.
 - Environmental matters, including climate change and energy conservation.
 - Set up a youth café.
 - Youth leisure and sport day

8. YOUTH COUNCIL – GRANTS FUND

- 8.1 In previous years, the Youth Council has been pleased to offer financial support to organisations and individuals and a grant fund has been established through the use of part of the funds received from the Borough Council.
- 8.2 In 2006/07, the Youth Council again offered financial support and agreed grants totalling £80 to two members of the Ash Youth Forum to enable them to attend a team building weekend and of £200 to a member of the Youth Council involved in scientific research and attendance on a scientific expedition to the Arctic observing aspects of the natural world and measuring the impact of global warming.
- 8.3 The Youth Council has received very positive feedback from the beneficiaries of these grants and the Youth Council Co-ordinator will again be reminding schools and youth organisations in the Borough of the availability of funds for individual grants.

9. FINANCIAL ISSUES

- 9.1 As referred to in paragraph 1.2, the Council currently provides a grant of £3,000 per annum towards Youth Council projects and a further £3,000 for administration costs

and training. Surrey Youth Service employs a part-time Co-ordinator to assist at Youth Council meetings and facilitate project ideas.

- 9.2 The Youth Council will continue to need financial and administrative support from the Borough and County Councils to continue to develop itself and the Executive is requested to bear this in mind when they consider the 2008/09 revenue estimates.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Youth Council continues to develop its role and the continuing influx of new members and the closer working relationship with the Council's Play and Youth Officer and the wider Cultural Services team has given it a new sense of purpose. Members have been working hard and have created opportunities to develop themselves as individuals, as well as realising the importance of team working.

Background Papers

Agendas and Minutes of meetings of Guildford Youth Council

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