

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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The following paper is submitted by the Cllr. Turner for consideration by full Council at its Committees Meeting on 17th March 2021

Youth Matters

Context

For the purpose of this paper I suggest we define youth as 5-18.

Engaging with young people must be a key part of the work of our Parish Council. Young people are an invaluable resource in building a resilient community and recognition and acceptance of this fact is crucial to achieving our aims of an inclusive and harmonious community. We need to understand their needs and aspirations, something that has been brought into sharper focus through the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the younger generation.

The Parish Council has so far worked to establish a Youth Council. This has met with some success, but has begun to founder during the pandemic. We have provided a long-promised replacement youth and community shelter.

As the village continues to expand the need to engage with our young people will become more crucial as we look to build this resilient community that meets the needs of all generations.

There are a number of questions that we therefore need to consider:

- How can we develop our thinking to view our young people in a positive way?
- How can we best provide them with the support they need, ensure that they feel valued as members of our community?
- How can we support them to meet their undoubted potential?

The following paper will look at the obstacles we face and provide a framework for progress.

Obstacles

During the current lockdown it has been difficult to engage with the current members of the Youth Council via Zoom.

The Youth Council members are unfamiliar with the need to work in a formal way i.e. work to an agenda, appoint a chair, keep minutes.

To continue in its current form we will need to re-establish face to face meetings as soon as possible and provide more information and training about the required structure and protocol.

Development. The Way Forward.

In the mid to long-term the Youth Council will need to be sustainable. To achieve this a partnership needs to be established with local schools.

I have been in contact with Teresa Farley the Thurston Partnership Coordinator at Thurston Community College. She shares our enthusiasm to make the college a partner in the development of the Youth Council as a sustainable and key part of Thurston community.

The intention is to be in contact with Teresa again as soon as schools return. From that point we can begin to develop a youth strategy. This would look at meeting the needs of young people and the community post Covid-19 pandemic.

Current Youth Organisations

Established youth organisations e.g. Scouts, Brownies, Beavers, Football, ATC, Kick Boxing Academy and library groups should form an integral part of this process with their members invited to join the Youth Council.

Meeting the Needs of Young people. A Framework

The following are key areas:

1. Ensuring an ongoing dialogue between councils and young people.
2. Community Involvement. Embracing young people and facilitating leadership roles within the community.
3. Wellbeing (mental and physical) Providing space to meet socialise and exercise
4. Education (supporting schools in helping young people to catch –up)
5. Play. Understanding the importance of play and facilitating inclusive opportunities.
6. Leisure facilities accessible for both structured and unstructured use.

Addressing the Key Areas

- Conduct a survey in partnership with Thurston Community College to identify and prioritise the needs of young people. (Covering all key areas **and all ages**).
- To establish a Youth Council with **older?** student advisors who will sit on each of the councils committees (See NALC paper “Whatever Yeah? “Local councils and youth provision case study 1 Ringwood) Student advisors to be able to listen to the discussion and contribute but not have voting rights. (Key area 1).
- To appoint at least one outreach Youth worker to build relationships with young people, identify their needs and work to meet them. (Key area 1).
- To facilitate this by providing a ‘**drop -in**’ facility one night a week initially with free refreshments. This will give young people the opportunity to articulate their needs, voice concerns and engage in dialogue to help them to feel a part of the community. (Key area 2).

- Activities developed from this might then include, Arts and Crafts, sport, dance, drama, support for broader schoolwork. (link with the well-established activities at Thurston Library). (Key areas 3, 4.).
- Provide a supervised safe space for unstructured activities to take place i.e. meeting just to socialise, play computer games etc. (Key area 5).
- Continue to develop outdoor play facilities for young children and ensure that these are inclusive and accessible for all. (Key Area 5 & 6).
- Explore opportunities for young people to work with and support older members of the community e.g. shopping, checking on well being, sharing a cup of tea and a chat etc. (Key area 2).
- Develop a Facebook page or section of the Parish Council website dedicated to the voice of young people (Key area 1 and 2).

The development of the New Green community hub has a key role to play in this.

A useful reference in completing this framework was the NALC report:

Whatever, Yeah? Local Councils and Youth provision. (use this link to view the document)

It outlines five case studies where local councils have successfully set up strategies to engage young people and to meet the challenge of anti-social behaviour. The overwhelming message is that inclusion is vital to success.