

Children's Services

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting

Thursday 15th June 2023

Youth Cabinet Update

Purpose of the report:

The Youth Cabinet would like to provide members with an update of their work.



1.1 **Monthly Meetings**

At May's Monthly Meeting our guest speakers were from the Essex Wildlife Trust and Riverside Community Big Local in Grays to speak more about Falcon Woods – our chosen site for the Nextdoor Nature programme located in Grays. The Riverside Big Local representative gave us an insight into the history of the site, how the green space came about and the issues the site currently presents. Working in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust and Riverside Community Big Local we are planning a series of events to improve the function of the site with the support of residents. These events will include litter picks and a Community Day to consult with local residents about the site, how they picture the development and upkeep.

We are really looking forward to getting stuck into this project as it will not only improve the area for residents to enjoy but also support nature's recovery on our doorsteps.

1.2 **Working Group Meeting**

At May's Working Group Meeting we continued our interactive workshops with Thurrock Council's Local Plan Manager. Our chosen problem to explore at this meeting was 'open spaces within Thurrock', how they are currently used and how they could potentially be improved. The current format is that we pick a problem in Thurrock that we think planning could solve. We discuss challenges and opportunities with a focus on considering how other types of people might view the problem and then come up with potential solutions that the Planning Team can look at including in the emerging plan. We find the work to be quite fun and interesting as we get to be as creative as we like when exploring a problem but are also coming up with solutions on how we can improve an area. We feel like our thoughts and views on the future of the borough are being heard, listened to, and included into plans that matter.

1.3 **Research Project**

Back in February, Thurrock Youth Cabinet was approached by Tonic, a research company, with an opportunity for them to take part in a research project. The project, commissioned by Ofcom, is about understanding more about young people's experiences with online content that may promote or glamorise eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide.

A few members from the Youth Cabinet were involved in the co-design workshop stage of this opportunity in February, helping to develop appropriate research tools. More recently, a few members have taken part in the main research project through a 1-2-1 interview with a research practitioner. The interviewers themselves are trying to understand more about young people's experiences online. In particular, when young people see or find things online that make suicide, self-harm or eating disorders look appealing. Gaining an understanding of what young people think about it, how they respond, and what impact it has on them. The findings of the study will be used by Ofcom to develop guidelines and policies to keep young people safe online.

Youth Cabinet members felt compelled to have an input in this research to aid the work being done to safeguard young people online, which we feel is extremely important.

1.4 **Youth Cabinet News and Promotion**

In partnership with Thurrock Music Services we created a Youth Music Survey earlier this year, which was live for a month in March 2023. We had 187 young people take part in the survey in total from across the borough. We are in the process of liaising with the Head of Thurrock Music Services to form a Findings Report to share.

1.5 **Youth Wellbeing Day**

We had our Youth Wellbeing Day on Wednesday 31 May 2023 to raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing. We had 20 young people attend, including four youth cabinet members. The day involved debates about the pitfalls of social media and school pressures and how both of these topics can impact on mental health. The young people also canoed around the lake where they stopped at different points to answer health and wellbeing questions. During the lunch break the young people took part in a health and wellbeing themed quiz. After lunch the young people got back to nature and made giant bug hotels and built a campfire. Finally, young people were asked to write down a current worry or problem in their lives and the youth cabinet members provided them with hints and tips on how to overcome their worries and future worries. The day was a success, and the young people gave positive feedback about it.