
Youth Council for West Berkshire

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	18 December 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer)
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4750

1 Purpose of the Report

This report sets out proposals for the establishment of a Youth Council for West Berkshire in order to give young people a voice in local decision making.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive:

- (a) Agree to establish a Youth Council.
- (b) Approves the draft terms of reference and code of conduct as set out in Appendices C and D, which will be presented to the Youth Council following its creation for review and adoption (subject to any amendments).

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	As noted in the report, there are a number of additional costs. It is proposed that this will be funded through external contributions and a realignment of existing resources.
Human Resource:	HR does not advise on external processes or elections.
Legal:	There are no legal implications arising directly from these proposals.
Risk Management:	Safeguarding measures would be put in place to ensure the safety of members of the Youth Council.

Property:	N/A			
Policy:	The UK's approach to national policy on youth councils is currently in a state of development, with the government working on a new National Youth Strategy.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			Membership of WBYF would be open to all young people and representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged, with provision for co-opted places. Also, the upper age limit would be extended to 25 for young people with SEND. These measures should ensure improved representation for people with protected characteristics.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			Age is one of the nine protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act. The Youth Council would give young people the chance to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within their communities. Efforts would be made to support and enable appropriate representation on the Youth Council from people with other protected characteristics so that it would be inclusive in terms of ability/disability, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political belief, and religion.
Environmental Impact:		X		N/A
Health Impact:		X		N/A

ICT Impact:		X		N/A
Digital Services Impact:		X		The Youth Council would need to have dedicated pages within the Council's own website. This could be managed by the Participation and Engagement Worker.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<i>'Support the Youth Council'</i> is one of the actions listed under Objective 5A of the Council Strategy: <i>Encourage and support our local communities to take the lead in driving what is important to them.</i>
Core Business:		X		N/A
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	Connor Markou (Senior Accountant) Nicki Thomas (Service Lead – Legal and Democratic Services) HR Neil Goddard (Service Director - Education) Rebecca Wilshire (Service Director - Children's Social Care)			

4 Executive Summary

This report considers the establishment of a youth council in West Berkshire to allow local young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them, which is a priority set out in the Council Strategy. The report sets out a potential model based on best practice, including a draft terms of reference document and code of conduct.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 Youth councils are forums that represent the views of young people at a local level. Run by young people for young people, they give them a voice and enable them to make their views heard. They give young people the chance to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within their communities.

- 5.2 Currently, there is no youth council in West Berkshire. However, Priority 5 of the West Berkshire Council Strategy (Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice) seeks to achieve a desired outcome to *'encourage and support our local communities to take the lead in driving what is important to them'*. Young people are identified in the Strategy as a seldom heard group within our communities, and involving a new youth council in decision making is listed as a key action to enable them to *'have a voice in local issues'*. This report makes recommendations about how a youth council might work in West Berkshire.

Background

- 5.3 There are over 620 youth councils operating across all levels of local government. A desktop exercise was undertaken to review a sample of youth councils established by other top-tier local authorities. The desktop exercise was supplemented by interviews and email correspondence to understand how they have been set up and operate, and to learn from their experience.
- 5.4 Most youth councils have a membership in the age range 11-18, which mirrors the UK Youth Parliament. However, some have different age ranges (e.g. 11-21, 13-19, 14-19). One example uncovered by the desktop review has extended the upper age limit to 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 5.5 The size of youth councils varies widely. Of those considered by the review, the smallest comprises 14 members, while the largest has an upper threshold of 45 members. Having too few members runs the risk of not being sufficiently representative of the local community, and meetings not being quorate, while having too many could result in meetings becoming unmanageable. The average membership of those youth councils considered in the review was 29.
- 5.6 Youth councils may seek applications directly from individuals, or nominations through schools/colleges/youth groups. Some actively seek to directly co-opt members from under-represented groups (e.g., young people with protected characteristics, students not in mainstream education, young carers, or those involved with Family Help Teams). Members may be co-opted directly, or through elections. Elections are often held via schools and youth groups. Schools often include voting within PSHE sessions or tutor time, which helps to ensure engagement with the process. Youth council members are generally elected for a two-year term. It is inevitable that over a two-year term, some young people will need to resign from their position due to age, moving away, or competing commitments, so youth councils may make provision for co-option of members from existing youth groups in between elections.
- 5.7 Once elected, youth council members need to appoint various officer posts. As a minimum, these comprise a chair, vice chair, and secretary. Where they are given a budget or have fundraising powers, they will appoint a treasurer. Often youth councils appoint other officers to cover roles such as campaigner, researcher, PR officer, etc.
- 5.8 Meeting frequencies vary, but usually there is at least one formal meeting per month, often with informal meetings in between for training, teambuilding, or small group activity to work on manifestos, develop campaigns, progress initiatives, or prepare for events, such as community youth forums or conferences. A typical time commitment would be 2-3 hours per week. Although it is recognised that there will be times when individuals

are unable to make meetings due to personal or study commitments, most youth forums require members to stand down if they miss three or more consecutive meetings.

5.9 Each youth council is supported by at least one Youth Engagement Officer. They will be responsible for the running and administration of the youth council, ensuring the smooth running of the elections, providing training and induction for new members, administering social media sites, and supporting social, personal and educational outcomes for the members.

5.10 Youth councils typically have their own social media channels, which are usually administered by the Youth Engagement Officer for safeguarding reasons, but the content is determined by the Youth Council themselves. Similarly, they often have a micro-site or dedicated webpages within the host authority's website.

5.11 Youth councils generally require a small budget to cover aspects such as:

- Election costs (e.g., printing and publicity)
- Teambuilding activities
- Meeting venue hire
- Campaigns
- Events (e.g., annual conference)

5.12 Local authorities generally don't provide youth council members with an allowance, but many provide food at meetings, and some also reward members with fun activities in the school holidays (e.g., a day out at a theme park).

5.13 The first few months after a cohort of young people are appointed involve a significant amount of development work, with an induction, training, and teambuilding exercises. Beyond these activities, the first year of the two year term would typically have a focus on electing officers, engaging young people to understand their concerns and priorities, and writing a manifesto, with the second year focusing on implementing the identified priorities.

5.14 Engagement with the host local authority varies, but may include:

- Regular informal meetings with the leader of the council and/or director of children's services.
- Allocating time for members of the youth council to ask questions at council meetings.
- Receiving reports/updates on youth council activities at council meetings.
- Inviting youth council representatives attend scrutiny committee meetings.
- Council members/officers may be invited to attend meetings to talk about issues of interest to the Youth Council.

- Council members/officers may request agenda items at youth council meetings, but efforts are usually made to limit these to avoid them dominating agendas.

5.15 Youth councils generally have a dedicated terms of reference/constitution and in some cases, changes are made to the host authority's constitution to acknowledge their role and their formal interactions with the host authority.

Proposals

5.16 Additional officer resource would be required to set up and run the Youth Forum. Two members of staff would be required to attend each meeting and there would be a significant amount of officer time associated with holding the election, organising teambuilding events, organising the annual conference, supporting campaigns, administering social media, dealing with queries and supporting the individual members of the Youth Forum. It is estimated that there would be 21 meetings per year. It is estimated that the level of support required would be equivalent of 1 FTE officer. There is no capacity within Children's Services to provide this level of support, and so an additional Participation and Engagement Worker would need to be recruited. The estimated salary would be £28,142 - £32,061 per year. The costs of this will be funded through existing resources and by seeking external sources of funding to support these activities.

5.17 There may be an opportunity for the Youth Council to be affiliated to the National Youth Council once this has been re-established, which would allow for the election of young people to become members of the Youth Parliament. There would be an additional cost, but this is currently unknown, since the British Youth Council closed in 2024 due to financial challenges. However, a new proposal is in development.

5.18 Draft terms of reference and a code of conduct are set out in Appendices C and D and it is proposed that these be reviewed and updated by the Youth Council once it is up and running.

6 Other options considered

The alternative is not to pursue options to establish a Youth Council for West Berkshire. This would continue to diminish the ability of our young people to be involved in local democracy. Also, it would continue to prevent local young people, relative to those living in areas that do have a Youth Forum in place, from being included in a Youth Council.

7 Conclusion

The establishment of a Youth Council in West Berkshire is considered to be a positive step that will enable young people to have their voices heard in relation to decisions that affect them.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Draft Initial Terms of Reference

Appendix D – Draft Initial Code of Conduct

Background Papers:

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: all wards

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West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

Contents

Section 1: Summary details.....9

Section 2: Detail of proposal10

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics12

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts.....14

Section 4: Review.....15

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Children's Services (Service TBC)
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	West Berkshire Youth Council (WBYC)
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	It is proposed to set up WBYC to allow local young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them.
Completed By	Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Services)
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	25 September 2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>It is proposed to set up Youth Council to allow local young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them. This is an aspiration set out in the Council Strategy.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>WBYC aims to ensure that the voices of young people are heard, and they able to express their opinions and ideas about issues that are important to them and to influence decision makers.</p> <p>WBYC will seek the opinions of local young people, represent their views, and campaign for changes that will improve their lives and outcomes.</p> <p>It is proposed that there should be up to 30 places on the West Berkshire Youth Council, with 24 elected places and 6 co-opted places. The co-opted places would be for young people from under-represented groups (e.g., those with protected characteristics, students not in mainstream education, young carers, or those involved with Family Help Teams). This would ensure that the widest possible range of views are represented.</p> <p>Young people can stand for election if they are aged between 11 and 17 years on the day of the election (or between 11 and 23 years for those with learning disabilities). This ensures a wide range of views and life experiences are represented.</p> <p>During the first year of office, members of WBYC will consult with local young people, prepare a manifesto and agree the campaigns that they wish to work on. Delivery of the campaigns would be in the second year.</p> <p>The Youth Council would organise an annual conference. This would provide a chance for young people across West Berkshire to come together and discuss issues of importance to them and to help plan WBYC's priorities for the coming year.</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

	<p>Members of the Youth Council would also be invited to attend meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. This would provide them with an additional opportunity to ensure that young people have a say in decisions that affect them.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>The proposals for WBYC have been identified following a review of existing Youth Councils and guidance/best practice in this area.</p> <p>The WBYC has been designed to be inclusive of all young people in West Berkshire, with particular efforts made to ensure that under-represented groups are included.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>Some areas have Youth Councils where membership that is determined solely through nominations or elections. This model was discounted since it would not ensure that under-represented groups were included.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal would ensure that young people have more of a say in the decisions that affect them.			
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYF will be open to all young people. The age range for young people with SEND will be extended to 25.			
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYF will be open to all young people. Representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged.			
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Equity Impact Assessment

Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYF will be open to all young people. Representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged.			
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYF will be open to all young people. Representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged.			
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYF will be open to all young people. Representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership of WBYP will be open to all young people. Representation from under-represented groups will be encouraged.			
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

EDI employee related EQiA's should now be sent to Human Resources hrenquiries@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Children's Services
Service:	TBC
Team:	TBC
Lead Officer:	TBC
Title of Project/System:	Youth Council
Date of Assessment:	25 September 2025

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data? <i>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will you be processing data on a large scale? <i>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension? <i>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will any decisions be automated? <i>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Equity Impact Assessment

	Yes	No
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised		

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.