

West Berkshire Youth Council

Terms of Reference

(Initial Draft – August 2025)

Overview

Members of West Berkshire Youth Council (WBYC) are elected by the young people of West Berkshire to represent their views.

WBYC aims to ensure that the voices of young people are heard, so they are able to express their opinions and ideas about issues that are important to them and to influence decision makers.

WBYC will seek the opinions of local young people, represent their views, and campaign for changes that will improve their lives and outcomes.

Membership

Members of WBYC must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Live in West Berkshire
- Attend schools or colleges in West Berkshire,
- be a member of a youth organisation that regularly meets in West Berkshire.

There are 30 places available on WBYC – 24 places are determined through elections via local schools and youth groups, with 6 co-opted places for young people who are:

- not in mainstream education
- members of under-represented groups
- young carers, or
- care-experienced

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 24 years for those with learning disabilities).

Membership of WBYC will be for a term of two years. Members may stand for re-election at the end of their two-year term, provided they still meet the criteria.

Members may resign at any point in their two-year term by giving one month's notice to the Chairperson.

A young person will cease to be a member of WBYC in the event of the following:

- they reach the age of 19 (or 26 if they have learning disabilities)
- they move out of the district, no longer attend a school or college in West Berkshire, or are no longer part of a youth organisation that regularly meets in West Berkshire;
- they are recorded as being absent for three consecutive calendar months of Youth Council meetings;
- when they give their resignation in writing

Members may be required to step down from WBYC if they fail to comply with the principles set out in the Code of Conduct.

Elections

Elections to WBYC will take place every two years.

The election timeline shall be as follows:

- September:
 - promotion through schools, youth organisations, the West Berkshire Council (WBC) residents newsletter, and social media
- October:
 - nominations open (all candidates must complete an application form)
 - information evenings are held about the Youth Council and the election
- November:
 - Nominations close
 - Each candidates creates a campaign video (with support provided for filming)
- December:
 - Candidates' information goes live on the WBYC web pages
- January:
 - Election packs are delivered to schools and youth organisations
 - Two week voting period
- February:
 - Election count and results evening
 - Youth Council members begin their term of office

For the co-opted members, communications will be sent to the Virtual School, the iCollege, the Reach Out Support Group for Young Carers, and other groups representing seldom-heard communities, inviting nominations. Applications will be anonymised and reviewed by members of WBYC with the successful candidates determined through a secret ballot of WBYC members. For the first year, appointments will be determined by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Officer Roles

At the first formal meeting of WBYC after the election (known as the 'Annual Meeting'), members will elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Public Relations Officer, and any other officers that they decide are necessary.

The Chairperson will be responsible for:

- the effective running of WBYC meetings
- agreeing meeting agendas
- ensuring all WBYC members are given the opportunity to speak at meetings and contribute to WBYC activities
- liaising with youth engagement workers about WBYC matters

The Vice Chairperson will be responsible for:

- helping the Chairperson with their responsibilities
- chairing meetings when the Chairperson is unable to attend meetings
- ensuring that other WBYC officers carry out their responsibilities

The Secretary will be responsible for:

- preparing meeting agendas and distributing these to WBYC members
- preparing minutes of each meeting and distributing these to WBYC members

The Public Relations Officer will be responsible for:

- preparing content for WBYC's social media channels and web pages
- writing press releases
- leading on the design of surveys
- ensuring that WBYC projects are inclusive and reflect the views of the young people of West Berkshire

Members of the Youth Council will also be invited to attend meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to represent the views of young people in West Berkshire and help to shape the future of education and children's services.

Officers of the Youth Council will hold office for a period of one year, and will remain in post until the conclusion of the next Annual Meeting after their election.

If a vacancy occurs among the officers between Annual Meetings, WBYC will have the power to elect a replacement from amongst its members. They will hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual Meeting.

Role of the Youth Engagement Workers

Youth engagement workers will undertake the following roles:

- Ensuring the smooth running of the WBYC Elections
- Supporting the administration of WBYC
- Facilitating each meeting and providing resources
- Helping to organise the WBYC conference
- Overseeing administration of WBYC's social media channels.
- Running teambuilding exercises.
- Providing ongoing advice and guidance to WBYC members
- Supporting measurable social, personal, and educational outcomes for WBYC members.
- Exercising safeguarding duties on behalf of WBC

Meetings

There will be 12 formal meetings of the Youth Council each year.

The first formal meeting of each year will be the Annual Meeting. At each Annual Meeting, the business shall include:

- Agreement of the annual report on the activities of the Youth Council for presentation to West Berkshire Council.
- The election of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and other officers.

All other formal meetings shall run to an agenda agreed by the Chairperson.

If the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are absent, the first agenda item will be to appoint a Chairperson for that meeting. If the Secretary is absent, then a temporary secretary will be appointed to record the minutes.

Any member who holds an elected role must give feedback about what they have done in their role at each formal meeting.

Any WBYC member can ask for a topic or motion be added to an agenda by contacting the Chairperson at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.

If a member would like to invite an external guest, then the member should inform the Chairperson and the supporting Youth Engagement Worker and explain why they would like the guest to attend.

West Berkshire Council (WBC) officers/councillors, or other partner organisations may request agenda items at formal WBYC meetings. Only one 20 min slot will be given to WBC/external partners per meeting in order to prevent these items from dominating the agenda. Additional time may be negotiated at the discretion of the Chairperson. Such requests should make it clear why the Youth Council is being

engaged and how their contribution will affect any associated decision making.

If multiple topics/motions are proposed for the same meeting, the ones that are to be debated will be chosen by the Chairperson.

Agendas shall be sent to WBYC members one week before the meeting, along with the minutes from the last meeting.

Informal meetings will be held between the formal meetings. These will be used for the following purposes:

- Induction and training
- Teambuilding
- Manifesto development
- Campaign development
- Planning events or other activities

Decision Making

Motions will be debated and voted on at formal meetings.

There must be at least 10 WBYC members present for a vote to take place. Voting will take place on each motion by a ballot (anonymous vote). In the case of a tied vote, the Chairperson may be given a casting vote.

The record of any debated motions will be recorded by the Secretary within the minutes of the meeting.

Campaigns

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.

Campaigns should be district-wide rather than specific to a particular location.

Communication and Publicity

WBYC will give a report to Full Council once a year on their campaigns and activities.

Agendas and minutes for each formal WBYC meeting will be published online to allow members of the public to view topics. This will be the responsibility of the Youth Engagement Worker.

WBYC will have an information page on the West Berkshire Council website, which will include:

- Current WBYC members
- The current manifesto
- Links to meeting agendas and minutes
- Updates on campaigns and events
- The latest annual report

WBYC members will be informed of youth council meetings and event dates via a WhatsApp account; it will not be open as a chat group. Members of the WBYC must have parental consent before signing up to the WhatsApp group.

WBYC members may also give face-to-face presentations and assemblies to raise the profile of the BCYC.

POLITICAL VIEWS

WBYC is a non-party political organisation and must present a neutral stance on political issues.

Members may hold allegiance to/be a member of a political party, but they cannot express their party political views as a Youth Councillor.

Members can meet with any political party at any time as long as their Youth Council membership is not used in any way to gain votes for that party.