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Report

Report subject: Salisbury City Council - Proposal for a Youth Council

Report to: City Area Committee (Community)

Date: 2 September 2008

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To outline the current work that has been undertaken regarding the creation of a Youth Council for Salisbury City Council and to seek the City Area Committee's views on future tasks.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Programme Office was tasked by the Salisbury City Parish Reference Group with investigating the possibility of creating a Youth Council for the new Salisbury City Council. A working group has been established to take this project forward and membership is currently Debbie Cameron, Project Manager, Tamzin Ewers, Project Support, Karlene Jammeh, Sports and Community Officer, Annie Scadden, Community Development Officer, Edward Callaghan, Bemerton Heath Neighbourhood Centre Manager. Discussions have taken place with the British Youth Council, Weston Super Mare Town Council and Chippenham Town Council to ascertain some of the areas which need to be considered and research has also been carried out on the internet.
- 2.2. A youth council enables young people to have a voice in order to raise their concerns, participate in local government and be empowered to take decisions and act to improve their local community. It would also enable the city council to be truly representative of the whole community whilst encouraging young people to take an interest in politics and their local area. A youth council would also demonstrate the intention of the new council to communicate, actively involve and consult with young people on a wide range of issues and assist with the city council's intention to become attain Quality Parish Status.

3. Representation and Membership

- 3.1. From the research that has been undertaken it would appear that the most successful youth councils have been set up based around schools and their associated school councils. Representatives from the school councils are then elected to the youth council. It is felt that this gives a very narrow representative group of young people and given the size of Salisbury, a wider representation should be sought involving both schools, youth and sports groups along with representatives from the harder to reach groups.
- 3.2. The age range and membership criteria for the youth council vary from town council to town council. Consideration needs to be given to whether the committee wishes to restrict the age range to a specific range eg secondary school age (11 - 18) or whether an alternative age range is preferred.

- 3.3. The committee also needs to consider whether the membership will only be open to young people who live in the City or whether this should be widened to cover young people who attend a school in the City.

At this stage officers feel that the membership and age range should be as inclusive as possible in order to encourage young people to get involved.

- 3.4. In the most successful councils, a budget has been given to the youth council to allow them to distribute grants to community groups etc and specific projects identified for the youth council to lead on.

For example, in Weston Super Mare the youth council has a budget of £12,000 per annum to award and, whilst approval to the awards and any advice is given by the Town Council, the decisions on the successful applications are made by the youth council. The youth council in Weston Super Mare was also involved in the project to set up of a drop-in venue (The Barcode) for 11 - 18 year olds so they had somewhere to go, buy non-alcoholic drinks and snacks and be able to meet their friends.

Many councils also use their youth councils to consult with on projects and plans which will affect the young people of the City. A youth council could be used to provide a valuable input in to the organisation of city events eg Christmas lights switch on etc.

- 3.5. In order to progress this project further it is now necessary to engage more closely with the local schools and youth groups etc. Officers would therefore like the committee's agreement to the commencement of discussions with the various groups to establish the level of interest in this project within the city.

If there is enough interest, it is suggested that the next stage should be to employ consultants to carry out some further focus group work with young people to find out their views and what particular areas they feel it should be involved in.

The committee is asked to note the cost of using consultants which would be in the region of £10,000 and to indicate whether or not they would be agreeable to this course of action if officers, in conjunction with the Salisbury City Parish Reference Group, feel that there is enough interest to take this project forward. These costs are seen as being part of the set up costs for the new council and therefore should be met by WCC.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report and to agree that officers should continue to further this project in line with the following recommendations, namely that;
 - 4.1.1 The youth council should have as wide a representation as possible
 - 4.1.2 Age should not be limited at this stage
 - 4.1.3 The membership of the youth council should be open to young people who are either residents of the city or who attend schools or youth groups in the city
 - 4.1.4 Officers progress discussions with youth groups, schools and hard to reach groups to establish the level of interest in the proposal and, if there is sufficient interest;
 - 4.1.5 To approve funding of up to £10,000 for the focus group work.

5. Implications

- 5.1. Financial: Outlined in the report
- 5.2. Legal: None at this stage.
- 5.3. Personnel: None at this stage.
- 5.4. Community Safety: None at this stage.
- 5.5. Environmental: None at this stage.
- 5.6. Human Rights: None at this stage.
- 5.7. Ward(s) Affected: All in the City.