

Report of: Head of Locality Partnerships

Report to: Outer North East Community Committee
(Alwoodley, Harewood, Wetherby)

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Date: 5 July 2021 **To note:**

Community Committee Youth Activity Fund Consultation Report

Purpose of report

1. The report provides the Outer North East Community Committee with background and context on the decision to not have a Youth Summit in 2020/21.
2. The report provides the Outer North East Community Committee with an update on the Youth Activity Fund consultation with children and young people. The consultation aims to inform the Community Committee's Youth Activity Fund spend for the 2021/22 financial year.
3. The report provides the Outer North East Community Committee with reflections from the last year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that this has presented Community Committees, the Communities Team and youth activity providers.

Main issues

4. Each Community Committee has been allocated a Youth Activity Fund which it is responsible for administering. The Youth Activity Fund has been made available to provide local activities for children and young people aged 8-17 years across the city.
5. The Youth Activity Fund requires the engagement and participation of children and young people in the decision making and evaluation of the fund. Children and young people are involved at each stage of the funding process and advise Community Committees on the activities they would like to take part in, in their respective areas.

6. The Youth Activity Fund can provide money for activities that offer opportunities for play, arts, sport and culture, which enable young people to have fun, get creative and have new experiences both after school and during the school holidays.
7. At the Community Committee Chairs Forum meeting in November 2020, Community Committee Chairs agreed that because of COVID-19, committees would deliver Youth Summits virtually this year, to ensure that events could still go ahead.
8. The plan was that the Youth Summits would be delivered before the spring round of Community Committees so that the event and Youth Activity Fund consultation could all feed in to the committee meeting. Staff in the Community Committee Team therefore were working with ward members and other council officers so that this could happen across all areas.
9. Given that we went in to a new national lockdown in December 2020 and that schools were closed at least until the 8 March 2021, the reality of the Youth Summits going ahead, albeit in a virtual format, were no longer realistic and the Communities Team were contacted by a number of Children's Champions regarding this matter.
10. After seeking advice from colleagues in Children's Services, the Executive Member for Communities agreed a proposal to postpone the Youth Summits. As the virtual Youth Summits could not be delivered before the end of the 2020/21 financial year, the Communities Team proposed that we would produce an online consultation survey on budget spend priorities with children and young people.
11. Capturing this feedback would ensure that young people were still able to inform the Youth Activity Fund spend for each committee in 2021/22. In this respect the survey would produce the same outcome as a physical Youth Summit, as priorities for budget spend could be presented to committees for their consideration, as the Communities Team have done in the past.

Reflections from the last 12 months

Youth Activity Fund Projects – Responding to the Pandemic

12. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a number of complications for activity providers that work with young people over the last 13 months. It has been a particular challenge for organisations to keep up to date with the changing Government advice and guidance regarding COVID-19.
13. Staff in the Community Committee Team have spent a large proportion of their time liaising with projects and organisations that wanted to work with young people over the last year, making sure that projects were able to demonstrate that they were ready to deliver their activities in accordance with Government guidance and legislation regarding COVID-19, making sure that organisations had the correct policies, procedures and risk assessments in place.

14. Leeds being moved in to Tier 3 in November 2020 and then again, another full national lockdown commencing in December 2020, once again signalled the seriousness of the situation in the city and the rest of the country. In light of the news from central Government on the new national lockdown, the Community Committee Team consulted with colleagues in Public Health on the matter and the recommendation was made that indoor youth group activity and most outdoor group activity should be suspended, with the exception of activity that was supporting vulnerable groups or targeted groups to help address specific issues, for example youth diversionary activity aimed at preventing anti-social behaviour in the run-up to and immediately after Bonfire Night. Using this approach encouraged everyone to reduce contact to help break the chain of transmission in Leeds.
15. Over the course of the last 13 months organisations and youth providers have continued to adapt to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented them and the young people they work with, often working very differently, for example by moving their activity provision to an online virtual platform.
16. Adapting responses and approaches for projects to meet the needs of individual communities demonstrates the committee's and the organisations flexibility and willingness to be agile in an ever changing environment, as well as the desire to reach out and connect with young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Temporary Youth Activity Fund Revised Criteria

17. As discussed and agreed in the Community Committee Chairs Forum meeting in November 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Executive Member for Communities agreed to apply some temporary flexibility until the end of the financial year to the current Youth Activity Funding criteria, to enable Community Committees to provide additional support to children and young people who may be experiencing greater disadvantages as a result of the pandemic and associated government restrictions/guidance.

Digital Inclusion

18. Over the last 13 months the Community Committee Team have received a number of requests from committees to fund digital equipment for children and young people from their COVID-19 monies.
19. Clearly there was a need for digital devices and data continued to be a significant barrier during the COVID-19 pandemic, with less prevalence of data support available. Potential options for committees to look at therefore when considering funding projects included, MiFi (a MiFi device can be connected to a cellular network and provides Internet access for up to ten devices), dongles to supplement device distribution, or support to families with devices who were unable to afford data.

20. As we continued to receive a number of similar requests and as a number of Community Committees were interested in spending monies on digital equipment and data, the Community Committee Team developed a checklist that would assist committees in making an informed decision when a request for funding for digital equipment and data was received.
21. The Outer North East Community Committee over the course of the last 13 months has spent £25,000 on digital equipment for children and young people. This includes Chromebooks, laptops, tablets and internet access.

Youth Activity Fund Consultation Survey

22. The Youth Activity Fund consultation survey was promoted from Monday 15th February 2021 until Friday 30th April, giving young people over two and a half months to provide feedback via the survey.
23. As the consultation survey ended on the 30th April this gave the Community Committee Team time to analyse the survey data & get reports ready for the summer committee meetings. The feedback however can also feed in to any Children's & Families Sub Group meetings that take place, in order to inform the committee's Youth Activity Fund spend.
24. Promotion of the survey has been publicised far and wide across the Outer North East Community Committee area, with information being posted on the Community Committee Facebook page, publicity being sent out to all our school & cluster contacts, youth groups and any other organisations that are funded, or work with young people in the Community Committee area, as well as being circulated to local Councillors and the committee mailing list.
25. As schools started to reopen from the 8th March, the Community Committee Team continued to make schools aware of the survey and its importance. This promotion continued until the 30th April in order to obtain as many feedback responses as possible.
26. As the Youth Service started to deliver some of their face to face service provision with young people from February 2021 onwards, the Communities Team also circulated paper copies to the service, so that they could get young people to fill surveys in.
27. The Outer North East Community Committee received 117 survey responses to the Youth Activity Fund survey. 117 of these were completed via the online consultation survey.

Youth Activity Fund Consultation Survey Recommendations

28. The consultation surveys submitted by young people in the Outer North East Community Committee area suggest the following Youth Activity Fund priorities for 2021/22:

- a. Youth activities to be offered both either inside or outside, depending on the time of the year. During the Summer young people prefer to be outdoors.
- b. Majority of provision taking place regularly in the evenings. Half of the young people asked said that they wanted the provision after school. Over half the young people consulted that they wanted something to do during the school holidays.
- c. Majority of the responses states that they wanted activities to take place locally and did not involve too much travel time. The young people recognised that public transport was an issue in the area. They wanted provision that they could get to themselves, whilst recognising parent's concerns about safety.
- d. Ensure the activities are inclusive of friendship groups, learning new skills, activities which are engaging and fun, good quality staff and having a variety of things to do.
- e. Popular activities included;
 1. Youth Clubs
 2. Cooking
 3. Sports (football)
 4. Music
 5. Arts and Crafts
(Other activities mentioned; outdoor adventure, trips/residential trips, dance, yoga, cycling, swimming)

29. It is recommended that any projects funded by the Outer North East Community Committee from the Youth Activity Fund focus on these themes and activities in 2021/22.

30. It is also recommended that the Communities Team arrange a physical Youth Summit (maybe to incorporate a virtual element) this financial year, 2021/22. This will inform the Youth Activity Fund spend for 2022/23.

Corporate Considerations

Consultation and Engagement

31. Community Committee Chairs, Children's Champions and Community Committees have previously been consulted on the proposals for the Youth Activity Fund survey.

32. The survey has been promoted far and wide across the Community Committee area, with publicity being posted on the Community Committee Facebook page, publicity being sent out to all school & cluster contacts, youth groups and any other organisations that are funded, or work with young people in the Community Committee area, as well as being circulated to local Councillors and the committee mailing list.

Equality and Diversity/Cohesion and Integration

33. All Youth Activity Fund funded projects are assessed in relation to Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration. In addition, the Communities Team ensures that the wellbeing process complies with all relevant policies and legislation.

Council Polices and City Priorities

34. Projects submitted to the Community Committee for Youth Activity Fund funding are assessed to ensure that they are in line with Council and City priorities as set out in the following documents:

1. Vision for Leeds 2011 – 30
2. Best City Plan
3. Health and Wellbeing City Priorities Plan
4. Children and Young People’s Plan
5. Safer and Stronger Communities Plan
6. Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy

Resources and Value for Money

35. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee Youth Activity Fund funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

36. There are no legal implications or access to information issues. This report is not subject to call in.

Risk Management

37. Risk implications and mitigation are considered on all Youth Activity Fund applications. Projects are assessed to ensure that applicants are able to deliver the intended benefits.

Conclusion

38. The Youth Activity Fund Consultation Report provides up to date information on the Community Committee’s Youth Activity Fund consultation survey position and invites committee members to use the consultation to inform its Youth Activity Fund spend for 2021/22.

Recommendations

39. Members are asked to note:

- a. Reflections from the last 12 months during the pandemic (paragraphs 12 - 22).
- b. Details of the Youth Activity Fund consultation survey (paragraphs 23 - 31).
- c. That the Youth Activity Fund survey informs the Community Committee’s Youth Activity Fund for 2021/22.
- d. That any projects funded by the Community Committee from the Youth Activity Fund focus on the themes and activity priorities identified in the Youth Activity Fund consultation survey.
- e. That the Communities Team arrange a physical Youth Summit with young people this financial year, 2021/22 and that this informs the Youth Activity Fund spend for 2022/23.