

Report to Cabinet

28 November 2023

West Sussex Youth Cabinet Update

Report by the West Sussex Youth Cabinet

Electoral division(s): n/a

Summary

The West Sussex Youth Cabinet has been invited to attend the Cabinet meeting on 28 November 2023 to provide an update on its activities and future plans. This paper has been provided by the Youth Cabinet to give some background information on its work and developments within its current manifesto.

Recommendation

Cabinet is invited to receive the update and the Youth Cabinet's comments, and is asked to consider and advise on the benefits to the Council and its residents of the work of the Youth Cabinet and where it can offer counsel and support.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The Youth Cabinet and UK Youth Parliament for West Sussex is an organisation made up of 48 young people, between the ages of 11 and 18, who are elected every 2 years to represent the views of young people in West Sussex through various campaigns. The last Youth Cabinet and Youth Parliament elections took place in March 2022.
- 1.2 Following each election, the Youth Cabinet sets 'Our Manifesto' which outlines the key campaigns that we will focus on over the two year term. Through our campaigns, we aim to empower all children and young people across the West Sussex area. We do this by using their voices in an effective and compassionate way to make positive change to our community. Make Your Mark, a ballot open to all young people in the UK, helps us establish focus points for campaigns - with 434,492 young people voting across the country in 2022 with 11,212 young people voting in West Sussex. Other focus areas are agreed upon by the Youth Cabinet, and what we feel is relevant to the young people of West Sussex, and the UK.

2. Our Current Campaigns from Our Manifesto

Youth Safety

- 2.1 A campaign combining Knife Crime, Homelessness and Domestic Violence. The aim of the campaign is to ensure that young people are being heard in regards

to their safety, they are wholly informed on measures to keep themselves safe and feel overall just safer.

- 2.2 A survey of young people was carried out to inform us about what young people wanted us to focus on specifically for this campaign. Helping young people to feel safe was a key theme identified and was our chosen discussion topic at the recent Engagement session with County Councillors that took place on 16 October. Particular themes that were explored included feeling safe in communities, building relationships with the police and violence against women. We were able to discuss these issues with officers from Community Safety and the Police and share the outcomes of our survey to help inform future work.
- 2.3 The Youth Cabinet have also worked with the police, attending Independent Advisory Group (IAG) meetings and to give the input of young people
- 2.4 The campaign uses social media to post information on where young people can get the help that they need and raise awareness at key points during the year, such as during anti-bullying week. We are also exploring creating podcasts on digital safety.

Racial Inequality

- 2.5 The goal of this campaign is to bring awareness to the issues of racism faced by individuals who live in the West Sussex area as well as showcasing where support can be found as well as comfort and understanding for those who experience it.
- 2.6 The Youth Cabinet is continuing to develop the Racial Ambassador scheme which has successfully been established in schools. This scheme is where young people in various schools champion equality in relation to race, religion, culture and ethnicity. Opening room for conversations within schools and young people actively being involved with creating schooling spaces that are accepting of all. The project initially began in 6 schools and is now being rolled out to further schools across West Sussex.
- 2.7 As part of this campaign, the Youth Cabinet wrote a piece for the West Sussex Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Service (EMTAS) magazine and hosted meetings on various issues including representation in the media and Stop Hate UK.
- 2.8 As part of the Campaign, the Youth Cabinet plan to host an in person event in 2024 which will include a panel of speakers and presentations on this topic.

Environment

- 2.9 In this campaign the main aim is to raise awareness about environmental issues that affect our planet to encourage people towards sustainable green solutions. This campaign is one of the Make Your Mark topics and also one that the Youth Cabinet has decided to continue from the last term.
- 2.10 The Youth Cabinet continues to work closely with outside organisations including the Marine Conservation Society and Community against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) and to raise awareness of climate change and plastic pollution.
- 2.11 The Youth Cabinet continue to post two podcasts a month on social media to educate people on the environment which are on all listening platforms.

Podcasts include topics on fast fashion and beach cleans as well as interviews such as the Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Deborah Urquhart, with more episodes planned.

Health and Wellbeing

- 2.12 This campaign was voted the highest in 2022 Make Your Mark. The Youth Cabinet and MYPs recognise the impact that the pandemic has had on young people's mental health.
- 2.13 The aim for this campaign is to educate and reduce the stigma around mental health disorders, introduce sign language into the curriculum, combat period poverty and ensure young people can continue to eat nutritiously during the current cost of living crisis
- 2.14 A survey was carried out with young people to understand the key issues affecting the health and wellbeing of young people. The findings were shared with partners and officers at a workshop to feedback on the issues highlighted by the young people.
- 2.15 The campaign has included some work on online safety and panic attacks with plans to focus on period poverty and nutrition in the near future.

3. What Else?

- 3.1 **Trip to Parliament:** The Members of the Youth Parliament visited the Houses of Parliament in November 2022 to take part in a debate.
- 3.2 **Campaign Days:** The Youth Cabinet held two campaign days in February and August **2023** which focused on pushing campaigns forward through creating detailed plans and focus areas for our campaigns.

4. What Next?

- 4.1 As a Youth Cabinet, we continue to strengthen the working relationship with the County Council. Having the opportunity to input into and provide young people's views on the issues being considered by Scrutiny, including an open invitation to attend the Children and Young People' Services scrutiny committee and regular meetings with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People have proven beneficial to all the members of the Youth Cabinet. The twice yearly engagement sessions with Councillors and Senior Officers have also enabled the Youth Cabinet to discuss important issues linked to our campaigns with stakeholders and decision makers, and a further event will be arranged for the spring. Recent topics have included the impact of the Cost of Living and Youth Safety and we will continue to focus on these over the coming year as the new Youth Cabinet is elected in March 2024. The Youth Cabinet also welcomes this opportunity to address the Cabinet on its work on an annual basis and will continue expanding and working on their campaigns to meet their end goal of empowering the voices of children and young people in West Sussex, as well as preparing for the good work of this Youth Cabinet to be carried forward by the new Cohort following the elections in 2024.

5. Details

- 5.1 There are no resource, risk, policy or legal implications for the County Council arising from this report by the West Sussex Youth Cabinet but we invite the

Cabinet to consider whether the issues covered are in line with the policies and priorities the Council has set for itself.

Contact Officer: Katherine De La Mora, Senior Advisor – Democratic Services
033 022 22535

Background papers

None