

## Community Services and Licensing Committee Report, 28 November 2019

### Background Paper G

#### Testimonies from Young People and Partner Organisations

##### Young people

The following comments are from youth voice representatives regarding their involvement in the Councils service. Some also give comment on the proposed youth work strategy.

##### **Marcus, 15**

*'I have very much benefited from my short time on the council, I have seen new places and got a better understanding of the goings-on in my local area. I have met new people in my community that I would never have met otherwise and I have made some very close friends. I would very much recommend the SDYC to my peers.'*

##### **Alice, 13**

*'I agree with all of the proposal. I am happy to see the proposal (youth strategy) for 2020-2024 contains plans to develop an enhanced social media presence.'*

##### **Lotty, 14**

*'I agree with all of the proposal. Although I have only been to one meeting I can see how much change young people can bring about. It has already taught me that one group of people can bring about a lot of positive change and need to be listened to.'*

##### **Tom, 17**

*'Firstly I agree with this report (proposal), the only thing I would like to see (in a truly ideal world) is a youth council seat on the district council but I know that probably isn't possible. In terms of success stories I would just like to say how good the youth council has been, it's really interesting to get some form of a look in into decision making in local councils and the people I have met have been lovely. It was a pain to have to switch between youth workers in the Stroud Town & Five Valleys Youth Forum (in 2016/17). The things that we have done have been really beneficial and given me a lot of experience I can carry through elsewhere.'*

##### **Morgan, 15**

*'I agree with all of the proposal.'*

##### **Miki, 14**

*'As a member of SDYC and Hardwicke Youth Forum, I've watched myself grow as a person and really develop in areas that I greatly lacked in. A year ago, I would have never seen myself as a principal member, let alone doing any presentations or expressing my opinion. Honestly, it would have just been a thought or a dream. But now, it's a reality. I've noticed my change in confidence, and watched myself fight my fears and anxieties. I used to be extremely insecure, and deathly afraid of talking in front of people, to the point that I would go into a full blown panic attack. Even though I still have much more to improve on, I know and can see that I have changed for the better. Learning to be confident around people was difficult, and I struggled a lot. I had to accept that I couldn't be good at everything, and life will always push you down. With the support of other youth voice members and the youth workers, I've been able to get back on my feet and try again. That's the difference between the past version of myself, and the present version, I'm willing to try again and I'm no longer afraid to fall. Honestly, if I*

*hadn't heard about the youth forums or joined SDYC, I would be a completely different person, most likely full of the insecurities that I have defeated. Youth Voice has really impacted me in an extremely positive way, and I'm so thankful that it exists.'*

**Helen, 17**

*'Throughout my 3 years on Stroud District Youth council I have always felt fully supported, encouraged to push myself to the best of my abilities and have continually been enabled to try new things that I would never otherwise have been given the opportunity to experience. It is vital that this type of youth work continues and that the District council continue to facilitate it. I agree with the proposal, as I think it is hugely important that the district council continue to support young people having a voice, and allow them to have an active role in politics, as well as helping to develop their confidence, teamwork and leadership skills.'*

**Annabel, 15**

*'In relation to the proposal, I agree with all of this. I especially agree with objective number six: to increase youth voice in SDC decision making, as it allows young people in the district to have more say in local democracy, by actively contributing to the work of SDC.'*

*During my involvement in the youth service, I have grown in confidence by talking to people from different areas of the Stroud District, while taking part in different events. Through my youth forum group, I have volunteered for Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust by clearing vegetation for new fences at Dimmel's Dale, which was enjoyable as I am interested in nature and conservation work. Planning this and fundraising at a car boot sale for the Dimmel's Dale appeal has also been rewarding, as I have contributed to conservation in my local community. I enjoy going to youth forum meetings because I can talk to other young people about our community and voice my opinions, knowing that I can make a difference.'*

### **Partner Organisations**

**Steve Arthur-Wallis, British Youth Council**

*'I believe Stroud is an inspiration and leader in best practise for youth voice in district councils around the UK. The respect and trust that young people have in you and your team really shows, as a district youth council you are in a unique position at our regional events.'*

*I have seen Stroud representatives at these events grow from observers unsure of their standing and position into leaders, ready and able to represent young people's views. Learning from every event they attend and becoming more confident. They now do a great job of ensuring the views of young people in Stroud are represented in debates as well as in plans we make as a region to campaign for changes young people want to see.*

*Alongside this you have been instrumental in ensuring that the views of young people in Stroud are being heard at a national level too by being a regular attendee of our Annual Council Meeting. I was so pleased to hear one of our trustee's feedback that she was 'inspired and impressed' by the Stroud young people and the way they represented themselves at our most recent event. I am saying this because I know this has been a journey.*

*The annual council meeting can be intimidating as it is a mix of National Organisation such as the Scouts and Guides with local organisations and groups like SDYC and alongside this are numerous procedures to understand. The representatives from Stroud this year stood up and proposed a motion to the council members and after debate it was passed onto our manifesto. This marked a journey from just coming to taking part to being an active part of who we are as an organisation.*

*Our manifesto is a summary of what young people believe in and we use this to campaign and represent young people's voices at a national level in the press and in Parliament, Stroud District Youth Council has been an active part of this. The young people and Youth Workers at SDYC should be congratulated on this and I hope that long may it continue.'*

**Dame Janet Trotter, Chair of Child Friendly Gloucestershire Initiative**

*'I have been acquainted with the Stroud Youth Services particularly for the past 16 months. Steve Miles has been an active member of the initiatives work.*

*My sense is that Stroud is to be commended on maintaining its Youth Service during a period of austerity. This has meant that the District has kept in touch with its young people. It has organised activities and has promoted the importance of taking young people seriously by investing in them and giving them a voice. Young people have been helped to see democratic processes at work and voice views of the services designed for them (e.g. review of GP services). Some of the young people have usefully engaged in Child Friendly Gloucestershire activities and have contributed excellently.*

*It is important that a broad diversity of young people is included in future and that they are drawn into policy debates affecting them and the future of Stroud. Encouraging them to be active citizens should be a very important part of the agenda going forward.'*

**Oliver Walker, The Eddystone Trust**

*'The Youth Council's keen interest and active involvement in sexual health across the district has been extremely encouraging and helpful. The council has been instrumental in the effective running of the county's C Card scheme through 'mystery shopping' and evaluations. The service and the young people themselves have been a pleasure to work with, particularly on issues surrounding gender and sexuality and we hope to be able to maintain our close links with the youth council. Their engagement with complex issues and topics highlights the maturity of the council.*

*The council workers responsible for running the service are enthusiastic advocates for the work that they do and support our work just as keenly.'*

**Dr Simon Opher, Chair of Stroud and Berkeley Vale GP Forum**

*I have worked with Steve Miles and Jemma Grieve and the SDYC for over 3 years now. I am always incredibly impressed by the group's ability to get young peoples voices heard in my specific area of NHS and health care. The council has arranged a number of meetings with myself. They also presented to the whole of Stroud locality GPs and nurse, which was incredibly impressive. They have been engaged in patient participation groups in local surgeries. They have also created, from scratch, a GP inspection process, that test whether GP surgeries are actually youth friendly. They have recently started this process by inspecting May Lane Surgery.*

*SDYC is a unique and wonderful organisation, in my opinion, well run by staff from SDC and the young people have really become involved. They are also useful to me as feedback about services such as mental health and contraception, and how young people are thinking and experiencing these services. I really hope they continue to develop and look forward to working with what I consider the mouthpiece of young people locally.*