

Liskeard Youth Council research and recommendations

This document sets out our ideas and outline recommendations to help Full Council decide on an overall approach to working with young people and youth organisations. Once this is established, more detailed work can then be done.

We visited Saltash and Redruth and spoke to young people and adults involved in their youth councils. We'd like to thank these people for generously giving us their time and sharing their experiences. They indicated that they would also be happy to help further. There is a summary of how these organisations work at the end of this document. We also looked at information from elsewhere, including Bridgewater Town Council, which has a well-developed youth grants system.

Based on what we have learnt, these are our initial thoughts and we would welcome input from other councillors.

Why have a youth council?

- To give young people a voice
- To involve young people in the town
- To bring youth organisations together and encourage joint working
- To enable youth organisations to pool resources and, for example, share training
- To provide a central hub for local youth organisations, for example to help recruit volunteers
- To build relationships between organisations which could help in the social care of particular young people with specific needs.
- To share good practice between organisations.

There are quite a range of possible aims here and some lend themselves more to direct involvement of young people (Redruth model) and some more to a way of bringing together youth organisations (Saltash model).

What could a youth council do?

- Award or make recommendations on grants
- Involvement in social action projects in the town like litter picking
- Take forward projects important to young people locally
- Organise events like Mission Youth and the awards evening in Saltash
- Take part in wider town events
- Be a sounding board for ideas

What could be its basic structure?

We considered a number of options:

- Made up of youth organisations/schools
- Made up of youth organisations/schools and with youth panel (Saltash)
- Made up of young people representing youth organisations
- Made up of interested young people (Redruth)

After some discussion we are recommending two different groups be established to meet the various aims.

We felt it was important to give young people direct representation and were concerned that if they were included in a group with adults their voices would be diminished.

We're therefore recommending that: a Youth Council is set up on the same lines as Redruth, open to all young people aged 10-18 in Liskeard, and with an external facilitator. The Town Council would give the Youth Council an annual budget (say £1,000?) and provide some administration.

We also recognised that a lot of the potential aims relate to youth organisations. Liskeard is lucky to have a wide range of active youth organisations. The survey earlier in the year showed that 19 of the 23 who responded said they would be interested in working together.

We're therefore also recommending that: the Town Council helps to set up a Youth Network - which brings together local youth organisations and schools to work in ways they find helpful. We anticipate that the Town Council would convene the initial meeting and could offer free meeting space but that, once it is established the Network would be self-sustaining. It might be useful for the Town Council to have one or more representatives at the Network meeting to ensure good communications.

How could youth grants work?

There are a number of options on who decides how the youth grants pot is spent, including the Town Council, the Youth Council and the Youth Network.

We would like to there to be a direct input from young people about how the grants are awarded.

We recommend that: the Youth Council makes recommendations on youth grants and the final decision rests with Finance Committee.

The eligibility for grants differs in the models we have looked at. In Saltash grants of up to £250 are given to organisations and individuals. In Bridgewater, grants of up to £500 are given to organisations only.

In Liskeard, we already have some specific grant-giving trusts for individuals. We would obviously want to ensure that these and other existing sources of funding had been looked at before individuals applied to the Town Council Youth Grants fund.

We recommend that: both individuals and organisations are eligible but the upper limit for organisations is higher, say £200 for individuals and £500 for organisations.

There is currently £5,000 in the Youth Grants budget and this could be divided as £1,000 for the Youth Council and £4,000 for other grants.

Councillors Anna Clarke, Naomi Taylor and Rachel Brooks
December 2018

Saltash Youth Council

The Youth Council was established 25 years ago to talk to all youth organisations in the area and to share resources and ideas.

It's main purpose today is to share information between groups and enable them to promote themselves.

Membership is open to all local voluntary youth organisations and schools and there are currently 25 members who pay a £5 annual affiliation fee. They meet 4 times a year and about 20 organisations attend each meeting.

It gets £3,000 from the Town Council every year and also some donations from companies. This money is mainly spent on grants and also on events (see below). The Youth Council however is completely independent of the Town Council.

Grants of up to £250 are given to groups and individuals.

The main activities other than grant giving have been:

- In the past, summer holiday events to provide food and activities
- Mission Youth - a major outdoor event aimed at young people and families where each organisation contributes an activity and which is a good way of promoting what they all do.
- An awards ceremony where each organisation is asked to nominate up to 7 members in 7 different categories. Everyone nominated gets a certificate and there is an overall winner chosen by the founder members of STYC. Businesses are encouraged to sponsor the event and are invited to present the certificates.

What works particularly well?

Mission Youth and also the good communications between organisations. People know there is the support.

What have you struggled with?

Getting groups to respond, eg to emails because group leaders are very busy.

What would you do differently if you were starting again?

Wouldn't call it a Youth Council. Gets too linked with the Town Council.

Saltash Youth Panel

The Youth Panel of the Youth Council was set up a year ago to give young people themselves a voice.

Groups and schools are invited to send representatives to the Panel, which has elected its own officers, including a chair. It is facilitated by a worker from Young People Cornwall. About 7 young people were present at the meeting we observed. All organisations are sent minutes.

The Youth Council has given the Panel a budget of £500 and they have also received a grant from Young People Cornwall.

The Panel ran a stall at the last Mission Youth event and are currently planning a concert to raise awareness around mental health issues. They had an input into the design of the logo.

What works particularly well?

Having different age groups involved (10-17) and people representing a range of groups, including Rangers, schools, the town band, a theatre group and a LGBT group. Snacks at meetings!

What have you struggled with?

- How to attract a wide variety of young people. Not just the 'motivated' ones.
- Ensuring proper safeguarding is in place.
- Finding the right times for meetings (currently 4.15-5.45 on a Monday).
- Communications with members (have now set up a group in Messenger for members and parents of under 13s).

Redruth Youth Council

Redruth Youth Council was established 6/7 years ago by the then Mayor as part of efforts to lift the image of the town and to involve young people, who are the citizens of the future. It was inspired by the Youth Council in Barnstaple, who advised on setting it up. Today its main purpose is to give young people a voice in town and council decisions and keep them engaged.

It is made up of young people who volunteer. They are self-selected, which means no barriers to involvement. They were initially recruited via publicity at the secondary school and a large open day. Now new members hear about the YC via stalls at events etc. There are currently 16 members aged 10-18. They meet monthly in the late afternoon. Outside meetings the Town Council admin staff communicate with them via email.

The YC is facilitated by Town Council admin staff who prepare agendas, take minutes, liaise with the TC and manage safeguarding procedures but do not intervene in discussions.

The YC drew up plans for refurbishing a local park with new play equipment. This formed the basis of a successful bid to Cornwall Council and the equipment has been installed. It is also involved in the 4 major festivals which take place in Redruth every year, conducting surveys, running stalls, for example to sell cakes and recruit new members, being in the town's parades.

In the General Election, someone from every party spoke at the YC and were asked tough questions. The YC had a visit to Parliament where they met MPs. Redruth is twinned with a town in Mexico and the YC is thinking about the youth element of the twinning.

The Town Council asks the YC opinions on all sort of things going on. Some of the young people made a presentation at Cornwall Council about what they do. They would be happy to come and present in Liskeard and the ex-Mayor would be happy to help us.

The Town Council gives the Youth Council £1,500 a year which they have total control over and they also do some fundraising. They do not give out grants but sometimes give money from fundraising.

How has the Youth Council made a difference?

- Better play equipment
- Given young people a voice about what is going on in the town. Their opinions count.
- Gives young people an option to be involved.
- Range of people with different backgrounds and views.
- Something for the town to be proud of.

What aspects work particularly well?

- Starting at 10 years old. The younger members have plenty of ideas and tend to stay involved. It's harder to recruit teenagers, who often don't find it cool.
- Giving young people real power and listening to their views.
- Councillors don't interfere. They can attend as guests if invited.
- Having snacks at every meeting!
- At the end of each meeting there is a 'new ideas' item. People can think about those before the next meeting.

What have you struggled with?

- To recruit people at the start. There was a dip in numbers early on. Reducing the minimum age to 10 really helped.
- It took a while to warm up, people didn't speak much at the beginning.
- To help with decision-making they have formalised it a bit. They now have proposers and seconders, for example.

What would you do differently if you were starting again?

- Make 10 years the minimum age