



# COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| Council name                | <b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>  |
| Name and date of Committee  | <b>CABINET - 4 JANUARY 2021</b>   |
| Report Number               | <b>AGENDA ITEM 8</b>  |
| Subject                     | <b>COTSWOLD YOUTH HUB PROPOSAL</b>  |
| Wards affected              | ALL   |
| Accountable member          | Cllr. Jenny Forde - Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing/Community Safety<br>Email: <a href="mailto:Jenny.Forde@Cotswold.gov.uk">Jenny.Forde@Cotswold.gov.uk</a><br>Cllr. Tony Dale - Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills<br>Email: <a href="mailto:Tony.Dale@cotswold.gov.uk">Tony.Dale@cotswold.gov.uk</a>   |
| Accountable officer         | Jacqueline Wright, Community Wellbeing Manager<br>Tel: 01285 623617   |
| Summary/Purpose             | To present the case for a funding proposal to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to enable the development of 'Youth Hubs' in Cotswold District and to consider Cotswold District Council becoming the Lead Accountable Body.   |
| Annexes                     | None  |
| Recommendation/s            | <i>a) That Cabinet supports the development of a youth hub/s in the Cotswold District;</i><br><i>b) that the Cabinet agrees Cotswold District Council as the Lead Accountable Body for the Cotswold Youth Hub Partnership, and that the Youth Hub Coordinators will be employed by Publica;</i><br><i>c) to approve a contribution of £5,000 from the Council's 2020/21 Revenue Grants.</i> |
| Corporate priorities        | Help residents and communities to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health and wellbeing,<br>Supporting businesses to grow in a green, sustainable manner, and to provide high value jobs  |
| Key Decision                | NO  |
| Exempt                      | NO  |
| Consultees/<br>Consultation | As set out in section 2 of the report.  |

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Youth (18-24) employment is a priority for the government's plans for economic recovery. The rate of unemployed young people tends to be four times higher than that of overall age groups. This means young people get disproportionately hit by economic downturns especially as a result of the pandemic and the impact on the economy.
- 1.2. In particular, avoiding long term damage to young people's prospects is a priority. It is known from previous economic downturns and research that this is a significant risk for young people – the longer young people are unemployed the more likely they are to be unemployed later in life, and earn less. This is why various types of support for young people are currently being developed such as the 'Kickstart' programme and the introduction of **Youth Hubs** where young people can access wider support.
- 1.3. These will be co-located and co-delivered with a network of external partners. Youth Employability Coaches will be recruited in all Jobcentres to support this remit for those young people who need a little more support and will focus on young people with more complex needs. The aim is to ensure the Youth Employability Coaches link in with all the Youth Hubs as well as Jobcentre work coaches who will make referrals to Youth Hubs.
- 1.4. Current figures for the Cotswold youth unemployment stand at 841 (November 2020). This number includes Cotswold residents that are using Cirencester or Cheltenham Job Centres.
- 1.5. The Department for Work and Pensions and Cotswold District Council have worked closely together over the last 3 months to develop a strong network of partners locally and a youth hub model that works for Cotswold District.
- 1.6. In the Corporate Plan the Council is committed to *"Work with the DWP, businesses, education and the voluntary sector to create more employment and learning opportunities for young people"* (Helping residents and communities access the support they need for good health and wellbeing).

## 2. MAIN POINTS

### 2.1. Needs of young people in the Cotswold

- 2.1.1. 'Young Gloucestershire' have been commissioned by CDC to run detached youth work sessions across the district and speaking directly to young people over the last few months. Concerns of local young people identified by street youth workers include:
  - Increased levels of anxiety and changes in home life, parents more stressed due to finances/ impact of losing jobs or being furloughed. Young people feel as though they have been overlooked.
  - Exam results are a big concern, young people are worried about grades/ next steps and what support will be available.
  - Young people feel as though there is not enough local support to deal with their mental well-being.
  - Concerns that they do not know where to access support whether about school, mental health or substance misuse issues.

- Young people overall would like to engage more within their communities and only travel to larger areas as there's 'nothing to do locally'. If there were more simple things like football nets or shelters, they would have better opportunities. Not a lot going on for teenagers they feel and would like to start suggesting ideas for what youth provision they would like to see. Young people really want to make change and would engage in activities should it be co-designed with them.
- Lack of Spaces to hang out

2.1.2. There is a recognition that in addition to finding employment there are a number of other challenges that young people are facing. Some of these relate to general trends among young people, some are specific to the Cotswolds and its rural nature, and others are a direct result of lockdown and a consequence of COVID-19.

These include "being work ready"(The British Chamber of Commerce's Workforce Survey found that 88% of employers believed school leavers were unprepared for the world of work, and 54% believed graduates were unprepared for the workplace) and "finding secure & meaningful employment".

2.1.3. Therefore, there is strong agreement amongst local partners and stakeholders that the Cotswold youth hub needs to take a holistic approach and respond to individual needs. This would include offering a wide range of options to widen a young person's pathway and to enable personal development. Pathways for young people are typically very narrow and there is not much choice or opportunity to try different things. Yet a variety of opportunities is a critical part of a good adolescence.

2.1.4. "The world of work has fundamentally shifted over the past 60 years. Labour markets are less stable, wages lower and there has been a significant growth of in-work benefits. Increasing numbers are self-employed, and statistics have shown that their earnings are falling relative to employee earnings, and the percentage of those looking for another job or more hours has almost doubled. Britain has an hourglass economy in which there is a polarisation between low paid, low skilled jobs and high paid, high skilled jobs with few if any paths for people to progress from the lower rungs to the higher rungs, resulting in low paid workers continually cycling in and out of the labour market, unable to progress. At the same time small businesses are creating two in every three new jobs and employers, large and small, are embracing new ways to find their employees through their networks to reduce time and resource spent on recruiting. Small businesses make up roughly 84% of UK employers, whilst only 20% of this sector uses the job centre to recruit. What this means for individuals is that in today's labour market as few as one in five of all jobs are formally advertised, meaning most jobs are found through word of mouth. Even those in work do not benefit from the security of a job for life and many have insecure contracts. Between the ages of 18 and 46 the average person will have 11 jobs, so the long term skills and resilience to navigate this landscape have never been more important. The growing significance of 'soft skills' in this context has been recognised by the Government, industrial bodies and think tanks. The term soft skills refers to a range of personal attributes that are experientially acquired and includes things such as confidence, adaptability,

motivation and relational skills. Soft skills have been identified as key to sustaining long term employability, but form part of a wide reaching skills deficit in the UK. An estimated 500,000 people are predicted to be held back by a lack of soft skills by 2020, at an estimated cost of £8.4 billion . Moreover soft skills are required to open up opportunities for hard, technical skills to be developed.

- 2.1.5. In the light of these changes, existing employment services have become less and less relevant to the people and businesses they serve. Despite these changes in the labour market employment support services continue to focus their efforts on CV production and an increased job search through online and offline applications with a ‘work first’ approach that encourages people to take any job, at any cost, rather than focusing on long term sustainability and progression. This narrow and short term focus and approach of existing employability services is costly and continues to fail young people who are looking to get their first step on the career ladder and need support in finding opportunities where they can develop.” (*Participle, EmployAbility 03 Final Report – October 2015*)

## 2.2. **Partners engaged**

- 2.2.1. There is strong buy-in from local stakeholders/partners to work together to achieve a common goal of holistic support for young people locally.
- 2.2.2. Partners willing to support and/or be part of the Cotswold Youth Hub/s include:
- Bingham Library Trust
  - Cirencester Town Council
  - Rotary Club of Cirencester
  - St. James Place Wealth Management
  - Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
  - The Churn Project
  - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
  - Cotswold Natural Landscape
  - World Jungle (Ben Ward- representing Cotswold Youth Network)
  - Inspire to Aspire CIC
  - Citizens Advice
  - Cotswold Counselling
  - South Cotswold Foodbank
  - Cirencester College
  - GEM Project
  - Gloucestershire LEP

## 2.3. **The Proposal**

- 2.3.1. Cotswold District Council, DWP colleagues, Cirencester Town Council and the wider Cotswold Youth Network are in the process of developing a proposal for a Youth Hub in the Cotswold District.
- 2.3.2. The aim is not just to create yet another “well-meaning service” that is driven by the goals of those creating it rather than the intended service users.
- 2.3.3. Cotswold District Council, Cirencester Town Council and the wider Cotswold Youth Network will offer an innovative and responsive service to young people between the

ages of 16 -25 who are not currently involved in education, employment or training. The partnership will provide a holistic service to support young people that offers a personalised support programme tailored to the individual needs of the young person. The proposal incorporates two key elements:

- 2.3.4. 1) **C-Hub - a bespoke youth hub facility in the heart of Cirencester** (kindly provided by the Bingham Library Trust) which will be staffed by a Youth Hub Coordinator (1.0 FTE) and additional support services as required. The co-ordinator will support young people from the south of the district through a combination of one-to-one (face to face or virtual/remote) support sessions, online training, and through referrals to other agencies and partners as required. This would also include an outreach service to more remote areas in the south of the district like Tetbury and Fairford/Lechlade.
- 2.3.5. 2) In addition there would be a **flexible rural outreach service** aimed at the north of the district also staffed by a Youth Hub Coordinator (0.6 FTE) to ensure young people can access support, even those geographically distanced from Cirencester. This coordinator will have a similar role providing one to one support, online training and developing networks and partners for referrals and additional support from various community venues ('outreach hubs') as well as remotely. The long-term aim would be to develop a second physical Youth Hub in the north of the District. Youth Hub Coordinators would be employed by Publica.
- 2.3.6. The hub and its coordinators would work with a number of partners from the public sector, voluntary and community sector and businesses to develop a menu of "ready to go" support services and opportunities in the form of basic skills training, life/soft skills training, "friendly work experience", work placements and wider skills & support opportunities. This will include: Rural Skills Offer, Life Skills Programme, Basic Skills Training, Business Mentoring & Support, Financial Management as well as additional one to one support as required as well as mental health support/counselling. The hub would work closely with the Job Centre as well as with the the GFirst LEP Careers Hub, delivered by the GFirst LEP Education and Skills Team (brings together secondary schools and colleges from across the county, providing a collaborative approach to strengthening careers information and experiences for young people in Gloucestershire).
- 2.3.7. The Coordinator role is at the centre of this local approach providing a safe space to return to and reflect on experiences. Through this reflection process learning is internalised and feedback can be given which will provide concrete challenges to work on so that young people can 'shape themselves'. Young people have the chance to choose an opportunity that interests them, do it and then reflect on the experience. The aim is to not just focus on deficits but to also identify strengths like critical thinking, creativity etc. which is often missed when feedback is provided to young people.
- 2.3.8. A good adolescence is not just about young people; it is about the relationships between young people and the worlds around them. Hence another element that is hoped to be developed through this project is to involve communities and to engage volunteers who connect with young people. This would support the development of young people through their shared participation in experiences within the wider community

### 2.3.9. **Outcomes include:**

- Clear but individual pathway for young people (16-25) not in education, employment and training
- A strong well-resourced youth hub in the heart of the district
- Good accessibility and inclusion through remote access and outreach
- Parents, teachers, DWP, social workers and other support workers have a clear focus on where to direct young people and access to relevant and up to date information
- 1-2-1 mentoring support, increasing confidence and motivation
- Create opportunities for young people where they can develop and reflect
- Shift from a focus on meeting people's immediate needs alone to fostering deep personal capabilities
- Engagement with employers / providers and closer relationships with local businesses
- Engagement with volunteers and local communities
- 75% of customers to improve their ability to secure work by building relationships, engaging in training, skills enhancement, work experience, more active job seeking, education or volunteering
- 100% of customers on caseload to have an agreed action plan (opportunities) / personal goal plan and time to reflect
- Evidence of continuous improvement of all participants.

### 2.3.10 **Benefits of this approach:**

- Builds on assets already existing in the community including the C-Hub facility but also the expertise of other VCS partners, youth service providers as well as facilities such as the growth hub, The Churn project, local businesses etc.
- It is responsive to individual needs of young people and focuses on long term sustainability and progression
- Includes an element of reflection through which learning is internalised (projects cannot just be about consuming activity and keeping busy)
- The capabilities approach focuses on what people are able to be and do, which is affected by daily life and the wider environment.
- Ensures coverage of a large rural area with low population density and builds on other tried and tested provision which has operated a north/south split for the district
- Links into other exciting youth initiatives taking place in the district
- Focus is on broadening young people's experiences and giving them new experiences and opportunities not normally available to them
- Multi-agency
- Solution focused

- Focus on sustainable outcomes by taking a holistic view on supporting young people and not just addressing issues in isolation
- By overseeing this project and employing and managing Youth Hub Coordinators directly this project links in with other service areas as well as initiatives and projects delivered by the Community Wellbeing Team, which enables better quality control and coordination.

## 2.4 Funding

Cotswold District Council, DWP colleagues, Cirencester Town Council and the wider Cotswold Youth Network are in the process of developing a proposal to apply for funding from the DWP for an initial 2 year project.

The various Cotswold partners are able to bring a significant amount of “in kind” and real added value to this proposal. This covers a number of key areas which will be required to offer a holistic and needs based support offer to young people on their journey. This includes the physical location of the C-Hub generously developed with support from The Rotary Cirencester Club, Bingham Library Trust and support from St. James Place and Cirencester Town Council is key to delivering this proposal. In addition, the Ozone Hub at Kingshill offers a fantastic outreach/satellite venue. We also hope to be able to identify additional physical locations which can be used for the north youth hub coordinator outreach service. This offer will be further developed when the coordinator roles are in place.

Overall in kind contribution is calculated to be around £84,000 and the additional cost of which the coordinator salary forms the biggest part is about £104,000.

The bid, which is still in development, is hoped to be submitted by early February 2021. The start of the Cotswold Youth Hub is planned for Spring 2021 (April/May) if successful.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. This project would be externally funded through the DWP with matched local funding mainly achieved through in-kind contributions from partners as set out above (2.3.5) (C-Hub facility, initiatives/training/mentoring etc.) as well as in-kind contribution provided by this Council in the form of a management fee (Hub Coordinators) over £2,000 per annum (x2) = £4,000.
- 3.2. Cabinet is asked to consider supporting the Youth Hub project with a financial contribution of £5,000 to be funded from the 2020/21 Revenue Grants Scheme.

## 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. If the bid to the Department of Work and Pensions was successful and CDC agreed to be the Lead Accountable Body the Youth Hub development would be overseen by the Community Wellbeing Team and work in partnership with other council services as well as above mentioned external partners. This would include management of the Hub Coordinators -employed by Publica and reporting to the Community Wellbeing Manager.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1. The youth hub will be designed to be open to all geographical areas and communities. The hub aims to help improve social mobility and life chances of disadvantaged young people. The aim is to provide equal opportunities to narrow the inequalities gap.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. CDC is not the Lead Accountable Body (LAB) hence another organisation needs to be identified and willing to be the LAB. Most local organisations are not covering the whole district and may not qualify as DWP may consider them a risky investment as they may have only been running for 12 months and they need to see 3 years books and established business to be confident, for example. The youth Hub Coordinators will most likely have to be employed by a partner organisation which will mean limited input by CDC as a consequence. However if the Local Authority would like to be Lead Accountable Body the financial validity is not in question as it is a government department.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. None.  
(END)