

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected: All  
Cabinet Portfolio: Deputy Leader

## **Strategic approach: Children and Young People**

### **Report by the Director for Housing and Communities**

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#### **Executive Summary**

##### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline how Worthing Council will deliver an inclusive and ambitious strategic approach to our work with and for children and young people, now and for future generations
- 1.2. The purpose of this strategic approach is to set out how Worthing Council, as a Council for the Community, will develop a responsive, proactive and constructive space whereby children and young people are actively engaged and involved as citizens and are visible in all aspects of the Council's core business, as we co-shape our places with communities now and into the future, in ways which can be evidenced through co-design and co-production.
- 1.3. This paper recognises that much of the direct responsibilities for children and young people sit with other organisations, therefore the principles set out here are focused on where we can influence or support others to deliver, where collaboration maximises potential

and development opportunities. We are committed to working with our community partners and with young people, to grow community capacity and resilience, leveraging funds and resources into our places to produce stronger outcomes and impact.

- 1.4. To embed our ambitious plans for children and young people in Worthing we will build strong participatory foundations through a co-designed partnership roadmap. This will move us beyond initiative-led activities, to develop sustainable forms of participation that are visible in our organisational ethos, our culture, our infrastructure and in our decision making processes.
- 1.5. Finally this paper sets out how this strategic approach will connect to the Council's core principles of fair, green and local.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That we adopt a framework for our work with and for children and young people of Worthing, as set out in section 4.
- 2.2. That officers continue to develop a live roadmap and that this is reviewed with our Member lead for young people as an established way of doing business.
- 2.3. To note that we will work with key members of our community to further develop our Worthing specific framework so that we have a definable evidence base to our work for and with children and young people and can measure both outcomes and impacts.

## **3. Context**

- 3.1. As a Council for the Community, we want our communities to have greater influence and control over what happens locally and, where possible, to pass power to communities. This also means going beyond the boundaries of what the Council controls to work effectively in partnership and co-produce with communities.

- 3.2. Working with our key partners, such as schools, Voluntary Sector, faith groups, who hold much of the statutory responsibilities for children and young people, this strategic approach is about influencing and creating an ambitious agenda for our town to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people and to ensure they are involved (along with parents and carers) in how this is shaped.
- 3.3. We see this approach as embedding the Council's foundational principles of:

**Fair:** An inclusive approach that enables all children and young people to have their voice heard and which utilises data and evidence to inform and tackle the issues that impede social mobility such as a result of social inequality. We will place significant social value on the rights of children to grow in environments that support them to flourish, be healthy and happy, and whereby they can access culture, sport and leisure activities that contribute to this outcome. There will be a key focus on the following key areas for consideration: mental health, emotional and physical wellbeing, community safety and safeguarding, education, skills, training and employment, homelessness prevention and housing. We will ensure that there is a specific focus on children and young people who are care leavers or who have experience in the care system. Where children and young people are disproportionately impacted by crises such as with the pandemic and more recently the Cost of Living emergency, we will ensure that we can demonstrate specific action that addresses the specific needs that emanate from these circumstances.

**Green:** Children and young people as central voices and action for our climate and ecological work, bridging the generational thinking and action needed for bold and sustainable change. We need young people as active participants in community action and co-producers of solutions. We need to enable the active participation and engagement of young people within our local green and open spaces, helping us to create these as places of physical and mental well being.

**Local:** Approaches recognise and support our emerging map of place and recognise and work with the way children and young people experience their neighbourhoods and the contextual issues that arise in local places and actively work on young people's lived experiences and how they feel about their neighbourhoods. More generally we will aspire to our children and young people feeling their community and

neighbourhood is safer, by working with young people and partners on pro-social activities that help to influence the perceptions of the community more widely reflects this.

- 3.4. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This principle recognises children and young people as actors in their own lives and applies at all times throughout a child's life.
- 3.5. According to the 2021 census data Worthing has a population of 110,727 (rounded data) of which we have 21,377 under 18 year olds, which equates to a little over 19% of our population. We need to ensure an inclusive approach to hearing and including the voices, views and opinions of a variety of young people are represented in all aspects of the Council's business.
- 3.6. There has been significant de-investment in youth service provision (non statutory) with spending on youth services in England and Wales having been estimated at a reduction in funding in excess of 70% in real terms in less than a decade, with the loss of £1bn of investment resulting in zero funding in some areas, according to research. Analysis in 2020 by the YMCA found that local authority expenditure on youth services dropped from £1.4bn in 2010-11 to just under £429m in 2018-19, resulting in the loss of 750 youth centres and more than 4,500 youth workers.
- 3.7. Children and young people are defined and viewed through a deficit lens - we all too often focus on negative behaviours, or we react to the somewhat isolated incidents or spikes in antisocial or criminal behaviour. We need to change the narrative, to one whereby we see the potential of all young people and of some behaviour through a public health lens and as a symptom of what children and young people experience and the adversities they can face in their lives. We want to work in a strength-based way that challenges the existing preconceptions and recognises the value that our children and young people have to offer our place. When children and young people engage in less favourable, pro criminal or antisocial behaviour, or engage in behaviours that are a detriment to their physical or emotional wellbeing, we will seek to understand where these might be understood through adverse experiences within their lives and environments and

work in a compassionate way to support children and young people to have healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

- 3.8. The Council's role is set within the wider context of the statutory responsibilities of the County Council for Children's Services such as Children's Social Care, Early Help, Community Safety, Education, and with NHS Sussex and the Integrated Care Board. Our role and interface with these overarching bodies is both strategic and operational. We represent at key decision making boards and partnerships and are engaged in national, regional and local agendas, where our primary responsibility and focus is representing our places and our people.

#### 4. Our Roadmap

In designing our strategic approach to children and young people, we want to build a strategic framework based on the following key pillars:

- 4.1. **All children and young people are visible and involved** and we have a clear and cogent definition of participation, co design and co production. That we can map assets, audit skills, and related activity across the Council and in commissioned services. That we have a clear position on roles, responsibilities, and accountability across the organisation, we champion children and young people and the regard we have for them is present in our organisational profile. We build opportunities that actively build the potential for intergenerational ways of working.
- 4.2. We operate an **asset-based approach** whereby we value children and young people's strengths and contribution to local communities and places. Participatory methods are embedded and information is designed to be engaging and accessible for children and young people.
- 4.3. That participatory methodologies are varied and designed to be inclusive of our Worthing communities. We adopt varied methodologies and children and young people co-design and co-produce participation approaches and inform service design. That we utilise a range of **evidence-based approaches** and insights in our work with and for young people where outcomes and impacts can be measured and scrutinised.
- 4.4. We embed a **systems approach**, so that where possible key policy developments, strategies and major developments reflect the views of children and young people and evidence how they have informed outcomes.

- 4.5. Strategies, policies and performance measures reflect our ambition, and we actively seek to build capacity, capability and resilience in our endeavour. **Equality, diversity, and inclusion** are at the heart of all that we do and we can evidence this through all core Council business and in our work with partners.
- 4.6. We will ensure our HR practices reflect our approach to working with and for children and young people, that **our workforce understands the value** of the approach
- 4.7. This approach forms an integral part of our Council for the Community approach, ensuring children and young people count as opposed to approaches that count young people, through traditional tokenistic initiatives. Our test becomes our live roadmap, it is not a static document designed to gather dust, or dusted off when we face a particular challenge or trend, it becomes our established way of doing business. This will include working in key areas, such as contextual safeguarding, mental health and wellbeing, community safety, homelessness prevention and participation and will inform future developments.
- 4.8. That we work with key members of our community to further develop our Worthing specific framework so that we have a definable evidence base to our work for and with children and young people and can measure both outcomes and impacts where this is possible. We will demonstrate that this is a new approach for children and young people in Worthing and one whereby we anticipate seeing an acceleration to activity that evidences children and young people being present wherever possible in Council led activity.

## **5. Engagement and Communication**

- 5.1. This paper lays the foundations of our engagement approaches with children and young people as citizens, which will form subsequent communication plans.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. It is anticipated that the costs associated with this paper will be funded from our existing budgets or via leveraging in external funding. However, if

this is not possible then members will be consulted on the release of additional resources.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.2. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation
- 7.3. Section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

Matter considered and no issues identified.

### **2. Social**

- 2.1 The work outlined in this report is expressly designed to increase social outcomes.

### **3. Equality Issues**

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the general equality duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.
- 3.2 In delivering the plan the Council must have due regard to the need to:
- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - b. Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
  - c. Foster good relations between different groups
- 3.3 This paper describes the Councils' commitment to providing truly inclusive services by listening to underrepresented voices, creating equal access and meeting our equality duties.
- 3.4 Given the breadth of work proposed and the complexity of relevant protected characteristics and their intersections it is not possible to analyse all the impacts of the plan in relation to legally protected characteristics. However, the Councils' legal duties (Equality Act 2010) will shape the development of the associated work plan, roadmap, in relation to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.
- 3.5 Actions and areas of investment identified in the plan, as well as other decisions relating to implementation of the plan, will require Equality Impact Assessments as proposals are brought forward to relevant committees.

#### **4. Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

The Council is committed to the promotion of communities as safe places.

#### **5. Human Rights Issues**

Matter considered and no issues identified.

#### **6. Environmental**

This work will support the participatory element of the Council's climate and ecological action plans.

#### **7. Governance**



Matter considered and no issues identified.