



## Whitchurch Town Council

### Youth Committee Constitution (March 2013)

#### **1. Constitution**

- 1.1 The Whitchurch Town Council's Youth Committee will consist of 12 youth councillors. It is not a formal committee of the Council, but is designed to mirror as closely as possible the workings of the formal committees.
- 1.2 All elected Youth Councillors will be given a copy of the Council's Constitution to help them understand the roles, responsibilities, vision and decision making of the Council

#### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 To provide access for young people to the Town's decision makers.
- 2.2 To represent the views, issues and opinions of young people in Whitchurch Town.

#### **3. Membership**

- 3.1 Full membership is where possible achieved by standing in a democratic election for youth councillor. These positions are not legal Members of the Town Council but will be as involved as much as possible with its decisions and processes.
- 3.2 Pupils from the Town's high school may elect a maximum of 5 youth councillors, with the remaining youth councillors elected through other youth organisations in the Town.
- 3.3 Any young person residing in Whitchurch Town, or who is a pupil at one of the Town's schools, or who works in the Town, who has reached their 12<sup>th</sup> but not yet 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (at date of normal October Election) may stand for election.
- 3.4 The first elections were held in May 2014, but elections in subsequent years will be held in October. The term of office runs to October of each year.
- 3.5 Elected Youth councillors may choose to serve for a maximum of four years before standing for re-election. They may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office, providing they are under 18 years old at the date of the Election. They must retire on their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, if this is before the end of a 4 year term.
- 3.6 Whitchurch Town Council Youth Committee is committed to full inclusion and full representation. Every young person who runs for election but is not elected will be encouraged to attend meetings in an advisory capacity.
- 3.7 If and when seats become vacant during the year, the vacancy will be offered to those who ran for election, but were not elected, in the order of the number of votes.
- 3.8 If a vacancy cannot be filled in this way, a by-election will be held, if the vacancy occurs before April in any year.
- 3.9 If at an annual election or by-election, all vacancies cannot be filled by election, the Youth Committee may fill by co-option.

#### **4. Electorate**

- 4.1 Any person over the age of 11 and under the age of 18 years, who lives or is educated or who works within the boundaries of Whitchurch Town Council area of authority, may vote in the annual elections.

## **5. Chairmanship**

- 5.1 The Chairman and the Vice Chairman will be serving members of the Committee and will be elected at the first meeting following the October election.
- 5.2 In the absence of both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, a temporary chairman will be elected for a specific meeting as first item of business.

## **6. Non-Members**

- 6.1 Young people may be appointed to the Committee to act in an advisory capacity to enable the members to make informed judgements relating to issues to unrepresented/individualist groups. (Appointed members have no voting rights)
- 6.2 Council Officers have a number of roles and responsibilities towards the Committee, these are:-
  - 6.2.1 To provide the necessary support to enable the committee to operate effectively.
  - 6.2.2 To support individual young people to ensure their full participation particularly where they have special needs or issues which may limit or inhibit their participation.
  - 6.2.3 To support and encourage the development of the committee ensuring that it operates an inclusive and democratic way, celebrating diversity and challenging prejudice.
  - 6.2.4 In all meetings officers and adult councillors have no right to voice views or opinions unless invited to do so by the Chairman or Vice Chairman.
  - 6.2.5 Officers may only intervene in debates and discussions where there has been a violation of human rights or the Equal Opportunities Policy or the Code of Conduct has been breached and the members themselves have not challenged this breach which must go through the Chair.
  - 6.2.6 Formal adult councillors have no voting rights and may not override the decisions of the Youth Committee, except where that decision contravenes Human Rights or the Laws of the Land, in which case they may advise the Committee of the consequences of their decision.
  - 6.2.7 Meetings will usually be held in public and the press may also attend. Committee may resolve to exclude the press and public if a confidential matter is to be discussed.
  - 6.2.8 Members may request that adults leave the meeting for short periods where deemed appropriate and they consider that the adult's presence would inhibit debate. It is acknowledged that adults will therefore be fully briefed on their return of any decisions or actions, which the Committee has made in their absence.

## **7. Meetings**

- 7.1 The Committee shall sit in formal session at least 6 times per year in the Civic Centre, Whitchurch. This will coincide with every second ordinary Council meeting.
- 7.2 In addition, there will be at least one training day.
- 7.3 Sub-groups and other ad-hoc groups may be established to address specific issues and tasks as and when required.
- 7.4 Members are expected to attend meetings regularly (minimum) unless the Chairman has been informed prior to the event apart from in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.5 Members will be expected to give their apologies and a reason for non attendance for all meetings

they are unable to attend.

- 7.6 Any member who fails to attend 4 meetings in a year without reason will be withdrawn from the Committee and their seat will be offered another candidate.
- 7.7 Any person may be asked to leave a meeting if they continually ignore requests from the Chairman or Vice Chairman to allow others to contribute to the debate or discussion.
- 7.8 The procedures, rules of debate and order of business will follow the principles of the Council's Standing Orders

## **8. Quorum**

- 8.1 The quorum required for decision making purposes is 4 people.

## **9. The first Meeting in each year**

- 9.1 Members will create a "Plan of Action" for the coming year based on the current issues expressed by their electorate.

## **10. Political Views**

- 10.1 The Youth Committee is a non-party political organisation, which is purely issue based, working on behalf of young people of Whitchurch Town and working in partnership with the Officers and Members of Whitchurch Town Council.
- 10.2 Members may of course hold allegiance or membership of a political party, but cannot express their party political views as a youth councillor or on behalf of the Whitchurch Town Council.

## **11. Voting**

- 11.1 The Committee shall make decisions by a simple majority voting system. Either by a show of hands or, where deemed appropriate by the Members, a secret ballot.
- 11.2 In the event of an equal vote, the Chairman has the casting vote.
- 11.3 In order that Members' motions and proposals may be voted on, they must be "seconded" by another member.

## **12. Equal Opportunity**

- 12.1 All members are equal in status regardless of sexuality, race, culture, age, gender, religion, academic ability, disability or any issue, which effects a person's life such as parental separation or financial status.
- 12.2 Members are expected to respect themselves and each other and to uphold the Equality Policy and follow the principles of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

## **13 Principal Council-Area Forums**

- 13.1 Whitchurch Town Council is committed to establishing effective communication channels with Shropshire Council and Local Area Forum and will seek ways to work in partnership with them, to promote local issues at all levels and to support each other in promoting active youth participation.

**14. Delegated Authority**

- 14.1 The Committee will have some delegated authority given to it by the Council. All decisions not delegated to it will, as is the case with all Council committees, be submitted to full council for approval.
- 14.2 Requests for funding will be submitted to Council or Finance and Strategy Committee.

**15. Attendance at Full Council**

- 15.1 All Youth Councillors will be invited to attend full Council meetings but legally would have to leave the meeting for any confidential items following a resolution to exclude press and public.

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