



# Herefordshire Youth Council Update Report

March- November 2006



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## Overview

As Herefordshire's first ever elected Youth Council we would like to give you an update of our progress over the last nine months. This report isn't in great depth but should give you a better understanding of what we have been up to. It has been a very busy year for us! We feel it is still early days in the development of this youth council and hope that you can see we have achieved quite a lot in this first year.

In March 2006 we were elected and attended our first meeting and launch event. April and May involved us getting to grips with our roles, getting to know each other and developing our identity. In this time we also took part in training and a residential focussing on amongst other things team building for the youth council, community mapping, holding elections for the committee, developing our terms of reference and code of conduct and also setting out of short, medium and long term goals. All these early 'setting up' stages took considerable time and energy.

We initially set up four sub-committees these being: Publicity, Youth Opportunity, Event/Conference Planning and a Consultation Sub Committee to deal with our main goals and targets. After much debate we also identified what we thought were the top 3 issues for young people in the county: **Leisure, Transport and the Environment**.

In June we began work on all of the above we also made contact with organisations and key people in the county such as the County Council, key officers, voluntary youth groups, schools etc by way of an introductory letter. During June representatives also attended other meetings and events such as the Community Strategy launch, Kaleidoscope 2 and the Info Zone.

## Where have we got to now?

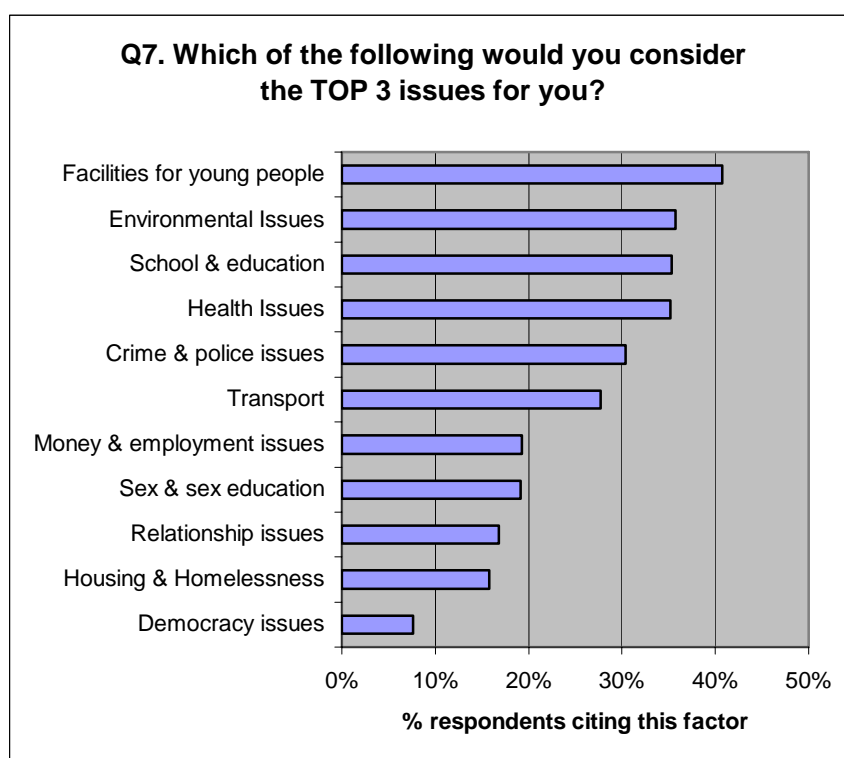
What have we done about our top 3 issues so far? In July we met with Herefordshire Council Cabinet members to discuss our issues and ideas for improvements and how we could develop communication.

- **Transport-** we met with Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, Councillor Wilcox.
- **Leisure-** The Youth Council have been part of the Play Partnership which is looking at a strategy and a bid to the lottery for better play and leisure provision for 0-19 year olds across the county.
- We have been a key part in the development and roll out of the Youth Opportunities and Capital Funds which provides 'things to do and places to go' for young people across Herefordshire. In the first funding round in October 2006 the Youth Funding Panel successfully granted money to many youth projects and young people across the county.
- **Environment-** The Youth Council have lobbied MPs to put pressure on the Government to produce a Climate Change Bill. Also a member attended a Climate Change march in London to continue this pressure.

## Consultation

We wanted to know what young people considered to be their top 3 issues so we designed a questionnaire to determine what these were. This questionnaire was piloted in two schools in July. We then developed the questionnaire further and Youth Councillors delivered it to key places such as schools from August –October. We also organised two consultation events in Hereford one in High Town with the Youth Service mobile bus and the other at South Wye Big Event. We used our questionnaire to further gain the opinions of young people. From September onwards we then targeted other areas and schools with about 100 questionnaires each.

We now have 685 questionnaires back and have recently analysed them. The top issues that came out of survey were:



So facilities for young people and environmental issues have remained as top issues for young people in Herefordshire, alongside school and education and health issues.

To continue this work we will be running two focus groups in schools in December to enable us to speak with young people in more depth about the issues presented. We will then present the findings to such people as the County Council. We would also like to set up an issues group to deal what has come up. We have made a good start with this but it needs to continue into next years elected youth council.

## **Consultation event: 'Something To Say?'**

We spent 4 months planning our first big event- Something To Say? This involved much hard work and time. The event was planned to be part of our consultation process providing a chance for young people from across the county to share views on issues that matter to them, find out more about the youth council, local democracy and have fun! Disappointingly the event was not as well supported as we had hoped by youth groups, schools, services and young people so we had the very difficult decision of cancelling it with a week to go.

## **Open Evening**

We have set a date Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December and invited over 30 key people from various organisations to attend our Open Evening so we can network with them and they can ask us questions. We hope that those invited will take up this opportunity to find out about us face to face!

## **Membership**

Our current membership is 16. Following some unavoidable resignations we have approached other young people who stood for election to see if they would like to be co-opted for the rest of the term and one person has taken this opportunity up so far.

## **Youth Opportunities/Capital Funds**

We have played a very significant part in the development and roll out of the Youth Opportunities and Capital Funds and some members now make up part of the Youth Funding Panel along with young people from other organisations. As a planning and task group we had a very tight timescale to work to o get everything ready. We successfully managed it all. Across the summer we set up the fund, devised application forms, determined grant criteria, and helped develop publicity. We received approximately sixty applications for the first deadline on October 6<sup>th</sup>. As a Panel we met on five separate occasions to discuss at length and make decisions about all the applications. The next deadline date for applications is January 26<sup>th</sup> 2007.

## **Publicity**

To raise the profile of the Youth Council we have been developing our website, writing updates and news pieces for this and newspapers. We developed our own logo and T-shirts have been made from this. Publicity for our event Something To Say was designed and distributed across the county, as was the Youth Opportunities project. A Youth Council member recently did a Radio Interview about being a Youth Cllr. Members have also attended events and meetings and have taken part some media training in September.

## Election Planning

The elections are coming! We have been involved in plans for next years' elections. We are developing publicity and hope to be out and about promoting the elections from January onwards in time for the series of local 'Making Your Mark' events to be held in early February 2007. At these events we hope to be able to help other young people understand what is involved with the position and the role of the Youth Council etc.

## Other key activities

- Members have attended 2 United Kingdom Youth Parliament Regional Meetings in Birmingham and the Youth Council hopes to nominate or elect a couple of members to the position of Member and Deputy Member in the new year.
- In July we met with Cabinet Members.
- We took part in a team building event Bodenham lake.
- October met with Jon Ralph- head of Youth Services
- November we met with Paul Keetch MP to discuss current issues- transport, drugs in schools and eating disorders.
- A member has been involved in consultation and in the review of aspects of the Connexions service and has produced a DVD.
- Members have been invited to sit on numerous boards. Some that now have Youth Council reps are:
  - The Local Network Fund.
  - The shadow Children and Young People's Partnership Board.
  - The Play Partnership.
- Others that are or will be considered are the Herefordshire Partnership Board and the Civic Society.

## Local involvement

Some members are part of local Youth Forums such as Ledbury Youth Forum, and have taken part in local activities and networks. We would like to do much more local work but in this first year we have recognised that it has been quite difficult to get involved with local activities and projects as well as county wide activities. The Youth Council's energy has very much gone into setting ourselves up and establishing ourselves in order to provide a solid foundation for future youth councils.

## Further information

We hope you enjoyed reading this update report!

If you would like any further information please contact us or visit our website. The contact details are on the front.

