	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING – 8 SEPTEMBER 2022
Report Number	Agenda Item 8
Subject	YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Geoff Saul, Housing and Social Welfare Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk Councillor Joy Aitman, Stronger, Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.co.uk
Summary/Purpose	To share the findings of the Youth Needs Assessment
Annexes	Youth Needs Assessment Summary Report
Recommendation/s	It is recommended that the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee: a) Note the report as Annex A
Corporate priorities	Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Young people across West Oxfordshire have been consulted with

1.   BACKGROUND

1.1.   Covid-19 has had a significant impact on residents in West Oxfordshire, with voluntary and community sector organisations receiving increased referrals and newly created mutual aid groups picking up and providing additional neighbourly support. Young people were disproportionately disadvantaged by Covid with their education, social and work opportunities affected.

1.2.   The Council's understanding of the issues faced by children and young people, prior, during and following the Covid-19 emergency has been limited to date, and reliant almost entirely on countywide and national data which includes a very small sample from West Oxfordshire residents.

1.3.   It was agreed as part of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan that a district wide youth needs assessment would be undertaken to develop a comprehensive understanding of the priorities that young people identify as important to them in order to ensure that service and infrastructure provision meets their needs.

1.4.   The summary report is included as Appendix A.

1.5.   We worked in partnership with youth organisations to agree the surveys and to seek professional opinions about issues facing young people. This was facilitated through West Oxfordshire Youth Forum and the Professionals Reference Group.

1.6.   We had face to face conversations with young people and parents to gather more information about some of the key themes from the Youth Survey results.

2.   MAIN POINTS

2.1.   The key points to highlight are:

- 3908 young people in secondary schools and sixth form colleges across the district participated in our paper based Youth Survey.

- 177 parents participated in our online Parents Survey

- The majority of young people, and their parents, feel that West Oxfordshire is a safe place to live.

- Sixty-five percent of young people want to move away from West Oxfordshire when they are older and while a lot of them want to do so for positive reasons (education, travel and independence), some identified that their reasons for wanting to move away was due to lack of opportunities, rurality and expense.

- Mental health is incredibly important to young people and they have experienced difficulties accessing the specialist support they need.

- Climate change is very important to young people and some of them have anxiety about the future because of this.

- The most common barriers to accessing activities are due to them being too far away; too expensive or because they do not have anyone to go with them.

- There has been a significant impact on education, whilst some young people thrived because home was a safer environment than school, the majority struggled with education during lockdowns, worrying about getting behind in their school work and concerned about how this will affect their future.

3. MOVING FORWARD

3.1. The council may want to consider:

- A workshop on the topic with all Councillors – possibly as part of another event
- Providing funding for youth activities and potentially youth led activities to improve mental health
- Advocating strongly for more expanded specialist mental health services to support young people and their families
- Creating more opportunities to involve young people in the political system at a local level.
- Creating more opportunities for young people to influence decision making.
- Creating more opportunities for young people to engage with the Council in relation to topics of greatest concern – for example Climate Change
- Dedicated resource with focus on youth at the council

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. There are no direct financial implications of the report itself.

4.2. There were additional costs incurred by the Council in undertaking the work. This included additional officer time and costs for data entry staff. This would need to be considered if the exercise were to be repeated in the future.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. None associated with this report. All data has received is non-identifiable.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1. None

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. The terminology LGBTQ+ and non-binary are regularly used throughout the current report. If there is terminology that the council would prefer to replace this, it is important this is agreed as soon as possible.

7.2. The report considers a wide range of themes and highlights inequalities within West Oxfordshire.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1.   The survey was paper-based as it has been evidenced that this is a more effective way of achieving a high level of responses. A web based or digital solution was considered and could be considered again if this activity is to be repeated. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix B.

8.2.   Over 75% of young people identified climate change as important to them and this may be a key area where the Council can start to have conversations with young people, through social media and schools.

9.   ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1.   Not applicable.

10.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1.   None