

ILMINSTER YOUTH PROJECT (IYP)

REPORT FOR ILMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL: 16 MARCH 2021

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Background: The Bigger Picture

Communities face many challenges in the future ranging from the impact of climate change and building back communities damaged by the pandemic, to those posed by expanding populations. Part of these challenges are those faced by the young people: poor public transport links, county lines, the risks of exploitation, knife crime and disrupted education.

The vision of IYP revolves around the eventual creation of a Collaborative Community and Skills Hub here in Ilminster to encompass a Repair Shop, a Library of Things and a variety of workshops. With a focus on, re-skilling, sharing skills, up-cycling, raising carbon footprint awareness, the creative arts, biodiversity championing, mapping carbon footprints, health and wellbeing promotion. The goals include, addressing social isolation, waste reduction, social prescribing, community building and adult learning.

A Youth Group is part of this vision because young people are the adults of the future and engaging young people will be a key part of building Ilminster for 2021 and beyond. This is in line with other local initiatives such as the one currently being developed by the Blackdown Transition Group in Devon.

Ilminster has many clubs, groups and initiatives that are open to young people to join and many do so very successfully. However, there is a need to provide a more informal social safe space for young people, particularly those aged 12 and over. Moreover, the incidence of anti-social behaviour, although low, is unwelcome in the community and it may be that a young people-led rebranded/relaunched youth club can provide a range of activities that young people find acceptable and engaging.

The Ilminster Youth Project (IYP)

The intention of the IYP is to relaunch and rebrand the youth club in line with contemporary youth culture, with a strong link to the future community hub and a mission to offer a range of activities that will complement those already on offer in the local area. This will be supported by a paid youth worker who will enable engagement with young people and, in particular, hard to reach young people. The Ille Youth and Community building will be used in the first instance. The club may opt to relocate in due course.

The IYP is convinced that in order to try and secure the future of a youth club-type provision in the town, involvement of a recognised, established and successful local body is preferable to trying to “go it alone”. The reasons for this include:

- Youth provision must be inclusive. Harder to engage young people in the population can be difficult to reach and an experienced approach is useful.
- Accessing sources of funding may be more successful if done as part of a larger organisation.
- If local volunteers drop out, youth clubs will often fold when replacements cannot be found.

- Keeping up to date with the issues that young people face and with training requirements is more readily assured.
- Ilminster young people can benefit from being included in other initiatives in the wider Somerset via such an organisation, for example, with the RSPCA at West Hatch.

IYP Recommendations

Alongside the involvement of local volunteers, the IYP recommend the services of Young Somerset and that a service level agreement be negotiated for an initial 2 year period. This is to provide a youth worker for 2 days a week and, in addition, to organise DBS checks and essential training for the volunteers.

Young Somerset have confirmed that the costs we have been provided with, for a youth worker for two days, include all on-costs, i.e. inclusive of fees, training, DBS checks, risk assessments, mileage and other overheads associated with them employing a youth worker to cover Ilminster. The nature of the service level agreement eventually negotiated may, of course, increase this figure slightly.

The priority for Young Somerset will be to support the reopening of the youth club by providing model policies, templates, etc., and to lead delivery of provision at the youth club each week, working alongside locally recruited volunteers. This would also include some local engagement with young people via schools/the community as agreed in the service level agreement.

Young Somerset: Next Steps

A detailed action plan would be developed as part of a service level agreement with the Town Council and involving the local volunteers. Any work with schools would follow prior engagement with the schools, i.e. members of IYP will contact local schools to confirm that they would be willing for a youth worker to come into school once a week, for example. This engagement would then include some surveys of young people, report writing and gathering necessary consents of young people. Young Somerset say that the most effective preventative work tends to commence with Year 6 so, we would need to determine whether we wish to work on prevention with a Swanmead cohort or a more challenging older cohort from Wadham. The IYP's preference is that we do both, hence the need for a 2 day a week arrangement.

Alternative provider: Active Learning and Skills (ALS)

IYP has made contact with Peter May of ALS and can pursue an alternative quote with him if the Town Council wishes to have one for comparison purposes, however, at an earlier Town Council meeting the IYP was given the strong impression that ALS would not be a preferred organisation to re-engage with in Ilminster at this time, so this route has not been taken because IYP did not wish to waste anyone's time. In addition, it is expected that any like for like quote would be very similar to that put forward for consideration from Young Somerset.

There are no other organisations to recommend to the Town Council at this stage.

Involving Local Volunteers

As for our local volunteers, there will need to be a decision as to whether they are recruited and supervised locally, or by Young Somerset.

If they are to be recruited locally, Young Somerset can provide a training and DBS check package for up to 6 volunteers for around £500. Henstridge have done this.

The alternative is that local volunteers are recruited by Young Somerset and managed directly by them to work in this area alongside a paid worker. They would then come under their insurance, risk assessments, be DBS checked, trained, etc, at no cost to the local area* *this may depend on numbers of volunteers.* We may want to ask those who have been identified so far what their preference would be.

To date 3 local volunteers have expressed an interest in helping to run a new club. They are currently meeting amongst themselves to discuss how much involvement they each wish to have.

Work by the Minster including by the Diocesan Youth Pioneer Team

The churches in Ilminster are very much an integral part of the community and the IYP feel that it is important to acknowledge this role and to investigate a role for them with the young people of the town. For example, In terms of The Minster leading some detached youth work through the Youth Pioneers of the Diocese. It may be that The Minster comes behind the Somerset activity in prayer, offers to contribute financially, or puts forward volunteers to be trained to deliver detached youth work alongside paid staff. There is still a possibility that the Church would be willing to lead, but further conversations amongst Church Leadership Team and the congregation are required before any firm commitment is made.

In Summary

The IYP requests that the Town Council agrees to pursuing a service level agreement with Young Somerset as above for an initial period of 2 years and, furthermore, will look favourably on any reasonable application for support made to enable a successful re-launching of a youth club.

Costing: in the region of £15,700 for two days a week, for two years.

THE ILMINSTER PROJECT TEAM