

REPORT TO COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MARKET HALL YOUTH DROP IN



Report Reference COM-25-13
Meeting Date 16th February 2026
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The 2024 young people's consultation confirmed demand for an increase in provision for young people in the community. Recently, the Economy and Use sub-group of the town centre masterplan workstream met with young people who highlighted a demand for space for socialising after school.

The 2024 survey highlighted that further engagement should take place with young people to involve them in continued discussion about the design and delivery of new/additional services/activities.

Work on developing a wider ranging Youth Strategy will commence this year.

2.0 PROPOSED SERVICE

2.1 OVERVIEW

Following the comments raised through the town centre masterplan, the working group noted that a potential 'quick win' would be to explore utilising the Market Hall to provide youth activity after school.

The proposal is explore introducing a one-night per week youth drop in service at the Market Hall. The precise detail of the service would be shaped by further consultation and research and depend on development of the operational model. The preliminary concept, based on the recent comments from young people, is to provide a space where young people can drop-in, get a hot drink and socialise. Provision of entertainment (e.g. board and table-top games etc) would be explored.

The intention would be that the service can evolve through ongoing engagement with young people and other partners. Opportunities for partnership working with other relevant bodies would be explored (e.g. providing opportunity for organisations such as Just Drop In to showcase their services).

2.2 FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

The first stage would be to undertake specific further consultation with potential service users to identify:

- a) Desirability of the service
- b) Potential user numbers
- c) Activities / services they would like to have access to
- d) Preferred days/times

Following this engagement a plan for the service would be developed.

2.3 OPERATION AND FINANCE

It is envisaged the service would initially operate one night per week with the precise times are to be determined following engagement. The age range for the service is to be determined, but likely to focus on provision for teenage residents (c. 13-17).

The planned operating model would be to recruit a pool of volunteers who would facilitate the weekly sessions. Volunteers would be subject to DBS checks and provided with suitable training and support to operate the sessions. Recruitment for volunteers would be undertaken concurrently with engagement with young people.

As part of developing the service, the council's safeguarding policy and procedures will be reviewed.

The proposal is for the service to be free-to-access. The service would be funded from the committee's Youth Services budget. It is proposed that £500-£1,000 of the current financial year budget be allocated to set up costs, with the precise costs being determined through engagement with young people as the service is designed. The ongoing premises costs would form part of the operating costs of the building.

3.0 ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGY

3.1 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

Objective S3 of the strategic plan sets out an objective to increase provision of services, facilities and employment for young people. The establishment of this service would contribute to this objective and form a foundational first step in meeting the overall objective.

4.0 DECISION REQUIRED

The committee should consider:

- a) Approval of the proposed youth drop-in service as outlined
- b) Authorising the Town Clerk and Community Engagement Officer to design and implement the service following engagement with young people and recruitment of volunteers, within the parameters set out in this report and in consultation with the committee chair