

Whitchurch Youth Project Report **By Nigel Russell, Chairman**

The Constitution of the Whitchurch Youth Project states its prime objective as:

“The object of the Whitchurch Youth Project shall be to help young people, especially but not exclusively through leisure time activities, so to develop their physical, mental and spiritual capacities that they might grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society.”

“The organisation shall have powers to set up and run Youth Clubs in the parish of Whitchurch and to initiate and monitor Special Projects that further the object of the organisation.”

Youth Clubs Hampshire and Isle of Wight, which is an organisation comprising of 120 youth club projects in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, has told us that our junior club, Chill2This is the best attended club in the county. That is a major accolade and after approximately 6 years of existence, Chill2This regularly accommodates 80+ kids on a Friday night at the Gill Nethercott Centre.

Apart from club nights, club participants at Chill2This also enjoy a number of activities both regular (i.e. Teen Fitness at weekends) and also on an ad hoc basis for pleasure and to raise funds for the club.

In addition, our new club for the 14+ year olds, which is called The Bench has moved from strength to strength and now regularly attracts up to 25 young adults every Friday night at the Parish Hall. Apart from club nights, a number of individual events are jointly funded by the club and the participants such as go karting, quad biking, etc and there is the intention to run at least six activity based events per annum.

All in all, our clubs are a success story of which we should be very proud. Financially, we are pretty much self-sufficient (although the Bench is grant aided by Hampshire Children’s Services), we have a large indigenous youth population and attract a large number of youths from the surrounding area. The downside is that the youth in our community are considered a necessary evil but the reality is that they can and want to provide a positive contribution to the community. We must capitalise on this energy.

However, to ensure that our youth club success continues and that our members maintain their desire to be integral to advancement in the local community, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

1. We desperately need more volunteers to support both clubs on a Friday evening.

On too many occasions, we have had to close the club because of lack of the necessary number of helpers to support the number of attendees.

2. We are self-funded for our day-to-day operations but with more revenue from grants and donations we could do so much more.

We have recently set ourselves two major strategic objectives:

1. To foster strong relationships with the police, local community and other formal groups whose support we need to further our aims and objectives.
2. Secure permanent premises for both of our clubs.

With regard to relationships, we are already working closely with the local police and PCSO's (Police Community Support Officer) to ensure that the youth of Whitchurch are well cared for and respected and that they are encouraged to participate in the two clubs.

Securing permanent premises is a much longer-term project but is essential for the long-term success of the clubs and a number of options are being explored.

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