

# Youth Council Constitution

## **Vision**

The Tower Hamlets Youth Council aims to be the voice of young people by consulting with them on their issues and concerns and creating opportunities for them to address these by:

- Strengthening community relations
- Influencing decision makers
- Encouraging young people to speak in public
- Uniting young people
- Running projects, campaigns, workshops and lobbying

## **Purpose and Role**

The purpose of the Youth Council is to work with the Tower Hamlets Council to ensure the voices of young people are heard. It will:

- Ensure a youth perspective is provided to the council on a range of issues including those relating directly to youth
- Promote and encourage youth involvement in the planning and development of council services
- Ensure that the views of young people are canvassed and conveyed to the council, including providing advice on or assistance with formal consultations being undertaken
- Provide advice to the council on matters of planning and infrastructure (especially if they have a direct impact on young people)
- Provide input on matters relating to policy and strategic development

The Tower Hamlets Youth Council will:

- Address the needs of young people
- Campaign for the rights of young people
- Project the voice of young people
- Work with councillors and other decision makers
- Run projects which aim to involve a wide range of young people

The Youth Council meets every Wednesday at Tower Hamlets Town Hall and has a core group of 30 members for a fixed period of six months. If a member misses three meeting without excusing themselves they will be out of the core group.

The council will have a new elected chair every six months and have two representatives from each LAP area. The council will work in partnership with the Young Mayor and aim to involve all young people including young offenders, SEN, ethnic minorities, NEET and young people who attend private schools.

## **Objectives**

- To meet school councils every 3 months
- To have a Q&A sessions open to the public, every 3 months
- To visit Youth centres in every LAP every 3 months
- To promote the Youth Council
- To encourage young people to achieve more

## **Responsibilities**

Members are required to:

- Attend formal meetings
- Attend training and project meetings
- Work on project teams between meetings
- Be available to attend any other training/meetings that may occur which fits with youth council priorities
- Feedback Youth Council information to their networks
- Bring youth issues to the Youth Council
- Assist Tower Hamlets Council to canvas youth views

In return for their commitment, Tower Hamlets Council will provide members with:

- Training to fulfil their role as a Youth Council member, including leadership training
- Media opportunities
- Youth work support to the group
- Opportunities to attend conferences/seminars
- Opportunities to be a youth representative on various working parties/project teams
- Provide quality accreditation to enhance their skills and CV
- Training on and exposure to the local government political system.
- A budget at the start of each financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April)
- An ID badge for core members

## **Accreditation opportunities**

Being part of the Youth Council is not just about having your voice heard, it is also a personal journey where you will grow and develop your skills confidence and ability. Tower Hamlets Council will work with you to develop a personal develop plan, which is closely linked with the ASDAN award for volunteering.

## **Membership**

The Youth Council core group will comprise of a maximum of 30 members, and will have another 20 members who opt in and out of different meetings. Members need to:

- Be between 13-19 years of age (up to 25 with disabilities)
- Live or study in Tower hamlets
- Have the ability to work with other people and work in a team
- Be proactive
- Be committed to attending meetings regularly.

## **Elections**

Youth Council elections will take place through a democratic vote. In order to run for one of the elected positions you or another youth council member will need to complete the self election form and submit it to the youth worker at least one week before the election.

On the day of the election another youth council member will have to second the nomination in order for it to be recognised.

You or the person who has nominated you will then have two minutes to explain to the group why they should vote for you and what you can bring to the role.

Youth Council members will always vote for an elected position. If there is only one nomination then the candidate will run against RON (Re-open nominations). If RON receives more votes than the nominee then the election for this seat will happen again in two weeks which will give Youth Council members a week to run for this position.

The winner of the vote must receive over half of the vote. If the vote is tied then the current chair will have the casting vote. If it is the first election only, then the Young Mayor will have the casting vote.

The Young Mayor is also responsible for running the first election, after this time the Chair will be responsible for running and calling the youth council elections.

## **Positions within the Youth Council**

As a member of the Youth council you would have been made aware of your role and responsibilities to all its members and the young people you now represent.

The following details are designed to inform you of your role within the Youth council if elected. These descriptions were designed entirely by young people within the Youth Council and how they envisaged the roles.

## **CHAIR PERSON**

A Chair and Deputy Chair will be appointed every six months.

The Chair Person will be required to:

- Organise the Agenda with the Vice Chair person and Secretariat
- Lead the session and explain what the Youth Council will be doing and why
- Be the person in charge of leading on any debates
- Facilitate (scribe) when other people have to run the session (involvement team, outside organisations etc)
- Organise any votes that need to be delivered and count the results and let the Council know the results
- Attend meetings with the spokesperson and the vice chair (other members are invited as well but you must attend)
- Liaise with the young mayor's team to keep them involved and up to date with how the Youth Council is developing and being consulted
- Be the spokesperson for the Youth Council as required (i.e. at Council committee meetings, to the media etc.)

Your role is to be the lead person alongside a member of the Involvement Team during the session and to maintain order alongside the Vice Chair person; however, it doesn't give you the authority to make final decisions on behalf of the Youth Council without their prior approval via a vote.

In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair will run the meeting.

## **ICE-BREAKER**

Your role is to come up or research a fun, interactive ice-breaker that everyone can enjoy each week. The aim is to get the group up and moving about or maybe just to break down some barriers and relax before a session of the Youth Council begins.

It's not designed to belittle anyone, just to get people in a happier mood.

This is a role the Youth Council decided was essential to its development each week, as it's a great way to meet new members and get to know them, as well as remind the members we're here to enjoy as well as achieve.

The ice-breaker must remember to make sure the activities are:

- FUN!
- Interactive
- Interesting and creative
- New and unique each week
- Involve EVERYONE
- Led by a different person each week

They should explain the activity before starting and if possible try to base it on what we are doing within the Youth Council.

## **PHOTOGRAPHER / ASSISTANT PHOTOGRAPHER**

This role is vital in producing publicity and documenting the work of the Youth Council, so people can celebrate the success.

Duties:

- To document the sessions of the Youth Council where appropriate and save them for future use and presentations through taking photos and videos when the Youth Council contravenes
- To be the lead person/contact in the Youth council for 'outside' organisations to speak to concerning photos and videos
- To edit videos
- To Photoshop/edit photos when requested by the Youth Council for advertising or for celebrating events
- To be responsible for any equipment regarding this role (Camera, Camcorder, Tripod, CD Roms, Hardcopy and soft copy)
- To ensure that batteries are charged and replaced when needed (Youth Council to pay for any costs incurred where appropriate)

In this role you will be the lead person when matters concerning the above come into question, but you will always have to answer to the rest of the council on decisions which require their approval.

Examples of these kinds of decisions are:

- Any issues concerning payment to a group/company
- Any costs incurred by yourself due to this role
- Any breakages and the replacement of equipment
- Permission to pass on information regarding other members of the Youth council (photos, video footage)

## **YOUTH COUNCIL SECRETARIAT**

As the Youth Council Secretariat or as an assistant to this role you will be required to:

- Take notes at each session of all action points discussed
- Send the notes from each meeting out to all members of the Youth Council
- Aid the Chair person and the Vice-Chair person in arranging and preparing the agenda for each youth council meeting
- Email the Agenda to all members of the Youth Council

In this role you will be the lead person when matters concerning the above come into question, but you will always have to answer to the rest of the council on decisions which require their approval.

These decisions could include:

- The sharing of information with an outside person or organisation
- Any confidential or safe Guarding issues will need to be reported straight away to the involvement team

## **TREASURER / FINANCE CONTROL**

As the Treasurer / Finance Control or as an assistant to this role you will be required to:

- Have a clear knowledge of the youth council budget
- Keep a transparent and up to date record of all youth council expenditures
- Document all receipts for items bought by the Youth Council and keep copies of all receipts
- Plan how much money can be spent
- Research costs of events and propose information to the group
- Keep a record of food spending

In this role you will be the lead person when matters concerning the above come into question, but you will always have to answer to the rest of the council on decisions which require their approval.

These decisions will include:

- Sharing of knowledge with outside persons
- Getting prior approval on all spending
- Weekly/Bi-weekly updates

### **Finance**

At the start of each financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April) Council officers will make the Youth Council aware of their budget for the coming year. It will then be up to the Youth Council to prioritise their spending.

### **Expenditure**

The Youth Council budget must be spent on activities that support the aims and objectives of Tower Hamlets Youth Council. The budget will be used to fund all the Youth Council's training, team building, activities, campaigns and projects.

The budget will also fund all the Youth Council's miscellaneous costs, for example publicity, postage, stationery, room hire and refreshments. The treasurer (in liaison with Tower Hamlets Council officers) will take responsibility for monitoring the overall budget.

If any youth councillor or Tower Hamlets Council officer has any interest in any contracts, proposed contracts or any other matter they shall withdraw from the meeting and declare to the full council the exact nature of their interest, which shall be recorded in the minutes.

### **Remuneration and expenses**

No youth councillor shall receive any payment for his or her duties. Tower Hamlets Youth Council will reimburse youth councillors for any 'reasonable' expenses relating to their work as long as receipts are provided.

### **Declaration**

All Youth Councillors must sign up to, uphold and conform to the constitution, equal opportunities policy and code of conduct.

### **Code of conduct**

All youth councillors must adhere to the code of conduct throughout their meetings and work.

Youth councillors will:

- Adhere to the equal opportunities policy
- Send apologies if they are unable to attend a meeting
- Ensure that mobile phones are turned off or are on silent during meetings
- Respect others youth councillors' beliefs and ideals
- Not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
- Respect everybody's right to participate
- Respect other people, listen to them and not talk over them
- Not in any way claim to represent Tower Hamlets Council or the views of the Council.

### **Equal opportunities**

Tower Hamlets Youth Council is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities throughout its work.

This is regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, physical, sensory or learning disability, political or religious beliefs, responsibilities for dependants, marital status, socio-economic background, HIV status, trade union activity or on any other grounds that cannot be justified through the policy of the council.

### **Party political activity**

Tower Hamlets Youth Council will remain independent of all party political activities. It is within their remit to talk to all political parties in order to influence policy. They must not favor one party over another.

## **Grievance procedure**

### ***Stage One***

Put your grievance in writing and discuss with the Youth Worker.

It is the Youth Worker's responsibility to try to resolve the matter and/or provide an answer within seven working days.

At this stage (and all following stages) you may, if you wish, be accompanied by another youth council member.

If a grievance remains unresolved:

### ***Stage Two***

You may request a meeting with the Youth Involvement Manager.

It is his or her responsibility to try to resolve the matter and provide an answer within five working days.

If the grievance still remains unresolved:

### ***Stage Three***

You may request a meeting with the Head of the Youth Service.

It is his or her responsibility to investigate all circumstances, arrange discussions if necessary, try to resolve the grievance and provide an answer within five working days.

The Head of the Youth Service is the ultimate authority in all grievance matters.