



The purpose of this Report is to establish a Ventnor Youth Centre in two of the Portacabins at Boniface Fields from 1 April 2022 as strongly recommended by both the Assets and Services Working Group and the Development Working Group.

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**No. DETAILS**

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**1) BACKGROUND**

- a) The completion of the three-year lease of the double-decker Portacabin on Boniface Fields on 31 March this year provides an opening to provide the town with a dedicated Youth Centre for the first time in five years.
  - b) The Isle of Wight Council closed its Youth Service in 2014 as part of its budget savings and offered grant funding for three years from 1 October 2014 for the voluntary sector to provide local services.
  - c) The Town Council's application for a total of £86,33 was successful and its first Youth Officer was appointed on 1 October 2014 on a 25-hour week with the support of two sessional workers on two hours a week each.
  - d) Following the closure of the then Youth Centre in Victoria Street by the Isle of Wight Council on 30 September 2014, the Town Council took over responsibility for the building, that it had registered as an Asset of Community Value, under a Tenancy at Will dated 1 October 2014 followed by a currently expired lease.
  - e) Sadly, the identified fire risks and very poor state of the building made its long term use for Youth Work impossible.
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**2) TOWN COUNCIL'S YOUTH WORK**

- a) In advance of the ending of the Isle of Wight Council's Youth Opportunities funding at 31 March 2017 came a surprise offer to continue funding for a further year and the Town Council's bid for £19,941 (maximum offer (£20,000) was successful.
  - b) By then the Town Council's first Youth Officer had moved on and been replaced on 1 November 2016 followed by a further change of postholder on 1 December 2017.
  - c) Since the ending of the Isle of Wight Council's funding, the Town Council has included the cost of its service in its annual budget.
  - d) The Town Council's current Youth Officer Jordan Royl was appointed on 21 September 2020 following earlier periods as one of its Sessional Workers.
  - e) Throughout, the work has continued to grow in size and significance with a current membership in excess of 50.
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**3) A DEDICATED CENTRE**

- a) The service is currently being delivered in a range of spaces including the Green Room, St Margaret's Hall and Rew Valley.
  - b) Management of significant numbers of young people is challenging and the opportunities limited.
  - c) The advantages of establishing a dedicated base for the town's young people with two discrete areas and the benefits of a sense of ownership of them are both obvious and exciting.
  - d) The staff team has already met to discuss the development and, with the assistance of Councillor James Toogood, works to install a toilet and kitchen area are being explored.
  - e) It is believed that this will be widely welcomed by the town's residents given the recently expressed concern about opportunities available for its young people.
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- f) In addition, it will enhance the Town Council's case for renewal of Planning Permission for the whole site in October next year as the whole area will be clearly established for community use.
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**4) RECOMMENDATION**

The Town Council is recommended to agree the use of the double-decker Portacabins in Boniface Fields as the town's new, dedicated Ventnor Youth Centre.

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