



CABINET – 14TH JUNE 2023

SUBJECT: YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the issues raised by Children & Young People via the Youth Service's Youth Forum.
- 1.2 To seek the views of members in how the issue outlined in the report can be addressed.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the annual Youth Forum Conference in January 2023, Children & Young People have identified current issues that are important to them and have voted on Priority Issues for 2023.
- 2.2 The previously agreed process that follows the identification of issues is as follows:
 - Presentation of issues to Education SMT for information.
 - Young People present issues to Education Scrutiny and Cabinet for information and support.
 - Issues are presented directly by Young People.
 - Young People form a Project Group that meets weekly to address the Youth Forum priority issue, working directly with Officers and Members as appropriate on a range of initiatives intended to have a positive impact on the issue. This work will continue until December 2023.
 - Progress, outcomes, and impact, as a result of young people working to address the priority issue, is monitored through the Education's termly monitoring of the Service Improvement Plan.
 - The work of the project group draws to a close ahead of the next conference (January 2024), when the process restarts, and new priority issues are identified. Final impact assessments are completed, and young people receive feedback on progress made.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:
 - a) support the Youth Forum in its work to address the overall priority issue.
 - b) consider how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their priority issue.
 - c) have due regard to issues raised within this report by Children and Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure members are informed of the priorities identified by children and young people, and that the voices of children and young people are considered as part of decision-making processes.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Youth Forum enables young people aged 11-25 to have a voice on issues that affect them. Each year, young people's ideas and issues are identified in a borough wide consultation, structured and organised around five themes: Prosperous Caerphilly; Safer Caerphilly; Learning Caerphilly; Healthier Caerphilly; and Greener Caerphilly.

- 5.2 At the Annual Youth Forum Conference Young People are provided with the opportunity to further explore the issues raised via the borough wide consultation and engage in a dialogue with peers, relevant Officers, and Cabinet members. From exploring all themes within the context of young people's lives, young people identify and agree on a priority issue for each theme.

- 5.3 Following the Conference, an overall priority is voted for by young people representing the Youth Service, Schools, and Youth Support Services. The issues are listed below, with the percentage detailing the proportion of the vote through a borough wide ballot in which 2,145 young people participated. The issue with the most votes is the 'priority issue' and the one in which the youth forum will work on for 2023.

- 34% Learning Caerphilly - **Priority Issue**
Life skills – We need more opportunities to learn new skills including living independently, budgeting, car maintenance and BSL.
- 24% Healthier Caerphilly
Vaping – There is a need to raise awareness about the dangers and long-term effects of vaping.
- 21% Prosperous Caerphilly
Cost of Living – There is a need to raise awareness of advice and tips to help young people and families in the current cost of living crisis.
- 12% Safer Caerphilly
Drugs – We need more awareness around the dangers of drugs (eg Nitrous oxide and weed).
- 9% Greener Caerphilly
Green Outdoor Spaces – We need safe and adventurous play areas for all ages in our communities.

- 5.4 Following the ballot to identify the overall priority issue, the Youth Forum project group have since consulted with school councils and the youth service to further explore the issue and gain a more informed insight into why this is a matter of concern for young people. The project group has examined the consultation feedback and have identified common themes important to young people, including but not limited to learning more about independent living skills, employability, and money.

- 5.5 The Youth Forum Project Group have devised a programme of work that is feasible for them to carry out between now and December with the aim of addressing the priority issue. This will include:

- working with a range of Officers and Partners to look at what Life Skills learning, and experiences are available to young people in the borough,
- working with the Youth Service's Curriculum Officers to review the current curriculum content around Life Skills.
- work with Qualifications Wales to inform the work taking place on their 'Life Skills suite' website offer that they are developing for all secondary schools in Wales.
- consider a youth led 'Life Skills Lab' event for young people across the borough which can be developed into a curriculum resource for schools and youth groups.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

- Enabling children and young people to have a voice in matters that affect them is a statutory duty and the Youth Forum and the processes that support it, provides the mechanism in which this statutory duty is fulfilled.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report provides information and asks for support; therefore, an integrated impact assessment has not been completed at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications with respect to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications with respect to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This paper was presented by the Youth Forum Vice Chair to the Education Scrutiny Committee on 15th May 2023. Comments and responses are summarised as follows:

10.2 Members enquired about the use of outreach youth workers and how they support the young people in working on their priorities. The scrutiny committee were assured that the youth service outreach workers, along with all other sections of the service, deliver the youth service curriculum, and it will be reviewed to allow the priority identified by the youth forum will be included and delivered upon.

The scrutiny committee discussed the Life Skills priority and whether schools are the place for these to be developed and at what age, or if they should the provision be delivered outside schools. It was suggested that it should be taught between the ages of 14 to 18 both in and outside of schools.

Members agreed that those ages would be appropriate as young people are looking forward to the next stages of their lives and being independent, whether it be further education or living independently. The scrutiny committee acknowledged that although there is a role for schools in providing some of the skills/learning it is important to recognise that not everything can be provided by schools and opportunities outside the school environment to engage young people in a community setting is the way forward.

The scrutiny committee were informed that there is a lot of work in this area at both secondary and primary schools, particularly on relationships.

Members highlighted the work at schools on substance misuse, financial management with the new curriculum focussing on authentic learning experiences.

The scrutiny committee sought further information on access to British Sign Language courses, and how accessible it is for young people. Members were advised that BSL is on the Youth Service curriculum and has been provided in the past at the request of young people. In view of the current request by the Youth Forum the methods of delivery will be reviewed and inform how it will be delivered going forward.

Members expressed surprise that social media wasn't a Youth Forum priority and harmful content and asked if it was discussed by the youth forum. The scrutiny committee were advised that it was mentioned as an issue, but it wasn't selected by the young people as a priority on this occasion. Bullying was also mentioned but again not voted as a current priority.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the presentation and were impressed with the delivery by Brogan Mahoney the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum.

The scrutiny committee supported the priority of the Youth Forum, and it was suggested that members of the scrutiny committee could be invited to any events they have planned to support young people in taking the Life Skills priority forward.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and particularly thanked Brogan Mahoney the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum for the excellent presentation.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

11. STATUTORY POWERS

- 11.1 'Shared Purpose: Shared Future, Statutory Guidance on the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015', and in particular SPSF 3 – Annex B, which is issued in accordance with Section 17(3) of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and applies to local authorities in respect of local well-being plans and whenever they take decisions which might affect children and young people.
- 11.2 The Children & Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Section 12 requires local authorities to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them.

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