



CABINET – 1ST MAY 2024

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 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 2024, Young People have identified current issues that are important to them and have voted on a Priority Issue for 2024.
- 2.2 The 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 2024.
 - Progress, outcomes, and impact, as a result of young people working to address the priority issue, is monitored through 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 2025), 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 Cabinet are asked to:
 - a) support the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people.
 - b) consider how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue.
 - c) to have due regard to issues raised within this report by 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 young people, and that the voices of 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. 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 2,428 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 2024.
- 28% Learning Caerphilly - **Priority Issue**
Drugs – We need more awareness around the dangers of drugs (e.g. Vapes laced with dangerous substances and Cannabis) also county lines in and out of the Borough.
 - 25% 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.
 - 23% Safer Caerphilly
Personal safety – We need to feel safe in our communities on public transport and walking home at night to keep ourselves safe.
 - 14% Healthier Caerphilly
Body image – We need to educate young people about positive body image and the reality vs social media influences.
 - 11% Greener Caerphilly
Littering – We need more visible bins in our communities, and we need to educate people around littering and recycling and encourage people to be more environmentally aware
- 5.4 Following the ballot to identify the overall priority issue, the Youth Forum project group has further consulted with young people via school councils and the youth service to explore the issue and gain a more informed insight into why this is a matter of concern for young people.

The consultation feedback will assist the project group in generating ideas on how to address the issue. Some of the common themes emerging from the consultation include, but are not limited to the following concerns largely focussed on vaping:

- Accessibility and affordability of vapes in corner shops, vape bars or vaping shops.
- Lack of age identification checks conducted at the point of sale, increasing

availability to young people.

- The appeal of vapes through flavours and colours which target young people.
- Peer pressure and the normalisation of vaping amongst young people.
- Vaping behaviours on public/school transport and in the community/in schools.
- Vape litter resulting in younger children picking them up.

5.5 Over the next month, the Youth Forum Project Group will devise a programme of work that is feasible for young people to carry out between now and December with the aim of addressing the priority issue. This will involve linking with a number of LA and partner services including Trading Standards, Healthy Schools, the Local Health Board and Public Health Wales. The group will consider the proposed ban on the sale of disposable vapes, education on the dangers and harmful impact of vaping, and underage purchasing of vapes in small businesses across the borough.

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 report was presented by the Youth Forum Vice Chair at a Special Meeting of the Education and Social Services Committee on 20th March 2024. Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Supported the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people, to the Cabinet.
- b) Considered how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue.
- c) Have due regard to issues raised within this report by Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

11. STATUTORY POWER

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 and 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.

Author: Clare Ewings, Youth Service Manager
Lee Kabza, Youth Forum Coordinator

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Steve Harris, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Jane Southcombe, Finance Manager
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities