

Report from the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

Championing the views of Children and Young People: a possible way forward

Summary

1. This report takes forward the discussion at the previous meeting about the future of the Children and Young People's Champion, and of this Working Group, in the light of recent developments such as the establishment of the Youth Council. It recommends that *all* members of this Working Group become "champions" of young people's views and interests; and that the Group's remit be revised to establish its primary role as being a conduit for such views.

Background

2. Members had a wide-ranging discussion at the last meeting and heard contributions from the then Champion, Cllr Alexander, and from young people. Officers were invited to turn the discussion into a specific proposal for further debate.
3. In approaching this task we are conscious that although there was a broad measure of agreement on certain issues at the last meeting, there was by no means a complete consensus. Members were enthusiastic about formalising a relationship with the Youth Council, and about accepting a collective responsibility, as members of this Working Group (YPWG), for championing young people's interests. There was however less clarity about the way forward in relation to an individual "champion". There was little enthusiasm for seeking to appoint an external champion along the lines of the Children's Commissioner, and the young people were clear that they didn't want the role, if it continues, to be "political". On the other hand, it was agreed that young people needed to have a clear and unambiguous route to Members, right up to Full Council if appropriate.

Options and Analysis

4. In view of the above, and picking up on certain ideas put forward at the last meeting, officers propose the following:
 - That we do not for the time being proceed with a process to re-elect an individual champion. This would in any case be problematic at the present stage of the school calendar, and without any budget to support it. There

is no need, however, to regard this as abolishing the role altogether, which would require an amendment to the Constitution. If we take no proactive action at the present time, this would leave open the possibility of returning to the idea of an individual champion at a later date if Members/young people so desired;

- We amend the terms of reference of this Working Group along the lines of the attached **Annex A** to give all members of YPWG a role as “champions” (plural) of young people’s views and interests within the wider Council. We also formalise, as co-opted Members, the membership of some young people on the group, so that it becomes the main conduit for the exchange of views with elected Members;
 - Recognising the need in addition to ensure that young people have a formal route right through to full Council, we invite the Executive Member for Children and Young People to lay before it an annual report, jointly produced with the Youth Council. This could be reflected in a formal addition to her responsibilities as set out on p32 of the Constitution.
 - We give further consideration to the best way to ensure that younger children’s voices are heard.
 - We invite the Youth Council itself to debate these proposals and report back to us.
5. If members of YPWG are content with these proposals, once we have heard the views of the Youth Council they can be transmitted to the Executive for endorsement and on to Audit & Governance Committee in relation to any constitutional changes, which may arise.

Corporate Priorities

6. The issues discussed in this paper are consistent with the Council’s objectives to encourage children and young people to become active citizens, and to consult them about decisions that affect them.

Implications

7. There are no specific **financial** implications unless Members do want to proceed with an election for a new individual Champion, which would incur costs of around £5,000. There is no specific budget for this; the costs would have to be borne by Young People’s Services.
8. There are no specific **Human Resources, Equalities, Crime and Disorder, IT or Property** Implications.
9. **Legal implications:** Any amendment to the Executive Member’s formal responsibilities would require a minor amendment to the Council’s constitution in due course and will, of course, need to progress through the appropriate constitutional channels.

Risk Management

10. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

11. That the Young People's Working Group discuss the proposals put forward in this report and invite the Youth Council also to consider them. Subject to the Youth Council's views, recommendations will then be put to the Executive, for formal consideration.

Reason: To ensure young people's views are taken into account in Council decision-making.

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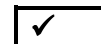
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Report Approved Yes Date 8 July 2010

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Previous YPWG discussions on this topic, especially at the meeting of 12 July 2007 and 14 April 2010

Annex A: Proposed new Remit for the YPWG

Young People's Working Group: Remit

Background

City of York Council's Young People's Working Group (YPWG) is a sub-group of the Council's Executive. It has no formal decision making powers but can make recommendations to the Executive or to the Executive member for Children and Young People. The Executive reviews its minutes.

Membership

Membership of the Working Group comprises those Elected Members agreed by Full Council, plus up to four members of York's Youth Council. It is for the Youth Council to decide whether to nominate four individuals, or to rotate attendance at YPWG meetings.

In addition, YPWG may from time to time co-opt other Members, or invite their attendance, recognising in particular the valuable contribution of the voluntary sector to this area of work.

Remit

The main function of the YPWG is to provide a conduit for Elected Members and young people to exchange views. Elected Members and Council Officers may use the Working Group as means of seeking young people's views on a range of issues. Equally, young people may use the group to raise issues that concern them. Each meeting of the Working Group will, as a matter of routine, have on its agenda an item enabling young people to raise such issues as they may determine.

Elected Members who serve on the YPWG undertake to act as champions for young people's views and interests in other Council forums where they may have a role, including Full Council, the Council's Executive, relevant Scrutiny Committees, and the Social Inclusion Working Group. The Executive Member for Children and Young People has a specific legal responsibility to further the interests of children and young people, and will look to the YPWG to assist him/her in discharging this role. The Executive Member for Children and Young People will work with the Youth Council and with the YPWG to prepare an annual report to be laid before Full Council.

The YPWG will consider how best to ensure that the views of younger children, and any others not represented on the Youth Council, may also be taken into account.