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Agenda Item No.6 (j)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

16 January 2020

Executive Director for Children's Services

THE BIG CONSULTATION

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet approval to:

Consult stakeholders on the future arrangements for consultation and engagement to replace the Derbyshire Youth Council (DYC).

2. Information and Analysis

Background

There are many requirements for children's services to involve children and young people in the work they do including but not limited to:

- Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Children Act 1989
- Health & Social Care Act 2001
- Education Act 2002

In addition to the requirements above there are several reasons why the council as a whole is committed to children and young people's involvement in decision-making including:

- A child's right to be involved in matters that affect them;

- The recognition that children are users of our services and should be involved as other users are;
- Better allocation of resources if services are informed by users and
- The growing evidence of positive outcomes for children and young people from their involvement; and
- The opportunities for children and young people to learn about and experience democratic processes and decision-making, and to develop an understanding of how local authorities work.

An independent review of the arrangements to support children's participation was commissioned and concluded in late summer 2018. The review looked at a number of activities including facilitating and supporting children and young people to participate in democracy and representation. This included support for the Children in Care Council 'Our Voice', facilitating the Derbyshire Youth Council, working with the British Youth Council and six Locality Youth Forums to ensure the voices of children and young people help shape both services and strategy.

The review recommended that further consideration should be given to the balance of activities to support children and young people's participation. Some activities, including the Children in Care Council, are statutory and help the Council to meet its responsibilities as a corporate parent to children in care. The review identified that these activities needed to continue. However, the review identified that a significant proportion of the available staff time and resource was devoted to facilitating the Derbyshire Youth Council. The DYC works well and is highly valued by those young people who participate, but it benefits a relatively small number of children and young people across the county. The review recommended that the annual programme for the DYC should be re-considered, and more strategic arrangements developed to enable broader consultation and engagement with children and young people across the county. It also identified scope to achieve modest efficiency savings as a result of re-focusing the programme of activities.

Current arrangements

The department facilitates a number of different opportunities for consulting and engaging young people across a range of issues including:

- The Derbyshire Youth Council (Originally formed in 2002 and the main forum used, this council has 36 members aged 11 to 19 voted onto the Council by children and young people through the big vote process every two years. The Full Council meets for a full day conference every two months with support from council officers to work on projects and issues which are important to and impact on

young people. Every two years the Council is re-elected, so new members can join. The current Youth Council is in the final year of their two year term in office and has been extended for a further year whilst this consultation is undertaken).

- Locality Youth Forums (There are a number of locality based youth forums across the county, some of which are run by the Borough or District Council and some within the localities which are supported by DCC officers. These include High- Peak Locality Youth Forum, North East & Bolsover Borough Council Youth Forum, Erewash Borough Council Youth Forum and Amber Valley Locality Youth Forum. These forums bring together young people from the locality with elected members and officers to consider a range of issues that matter to and impact on children and young people in their locality).
- Children in Care Council (Our Voice) (this council is a statutory requirement and is held monthly. It brings together children in care, elected members and officers to consider a range of issues that matter to and impact on children and young people in our care with support from council officers and care leavers).
- Care Leavers Council (this council is a statutory requirement and is held monthly. It brings together care leavers, elected members and officers to consider a range of issues that matter to and impact on young people who have left our care with support from council officers).
- School Councils (these are run by schools individually, and brought together periodically to consider a range of issues with support from a council officer).
- County wide locality youth forum (this is an event held bi-annually which brings together members of the locality youth forums, elected members and officers to look at a range of issues that matter to and impact on young people across the county with support from council officers).

Although most of the above opportunities are facilitated by officers within Children's Services Department, they are significant to the council as a whole as they provide opportunities to engage and consult with young people about all aspects of the council's business, and for young people to learn about and experience local democracy.

Current costs

	Total Costs £
Derbyshire Youth Council	58,286
Locality Youth Forums	2,075
Children in Care Council 'Our Voice'	2,268
Care Leavers Council	9,043
School Councils	58,865
Countywide Youth Forum	900
Total Costs	131,437

Recently the team has made a number of efficiencies in relation to the DYC through the cessation of membership with the British Youth Council and the associated activities, which have saved £6500 per year.

Initial Consultation

Initial consultation has taken place with representatives from the DYC and some Schools to capture their views about the replacement of the DYC with a new framework for consultation and engagement. This is what they told us:

- When we asked them about their experience of being part of the DYC they told us that the work of the DYC was really great to be part of but it was only available for a few young people and the money should be spent on enabling more young people to be involved in decisions taken by the Council.
- When we talked to them about how it could be developed they were keen to build on pre-existing groups and meetings and connecting them in a better way, possibly through the use of technology. They wanted to develop different ways of communicating about different issues and they wanted us to make sure that local issues were given as much importance as Derbyshire issues.
- When we asked them about the issues they wanted to be consulted on they told us they were most interested in the following:
 - Things that affect most young people rather than a few.
 - How the Council spends the money it receives and its long term plans.
 - What the Council and others are doing to meet their environmental responsibilities.
 - The quality of schools and services and what the Council and others are doing to improve things where they need to
 - Parks and Leisure opportunities.
 - 16+ services and work experience.

- Equality and Diversity issues.
- Which young people are struggling and what the Council is doing about it?
- When we asked them about the options of either not replacing the DYC or developing a replacement they told us their preference was to develop a network round the current school council structure and connect them to one another.
- As a final question we asked them how they prefer to be communicated with and most of them said they prefer email, text, face to face and by speaking to them on the phone.

Summary

It is clear from our initial consultation with young people that the Derbyshire Youth Council in its current form is not their preference for the future of consultation and engagement. Their preference is for a new network to be developed around the school council structure which:

- Enables as many young people as possible to be involved in the key decisions made by the Council and its officers;
- Ensures we consult children and young people about the issues that really matter to them in a way that works for them;
- Ensures the experiences and views of children and young people are used to shape our services and
- Ensures children and young people have access to a representative body who can provide challenge and hold services to account when outcomes should be better.

3. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - financial, legal and human rights, equality of opportunity, health, environmental, transport, property, crime and disorder and social value considerations.

4. Background Papers

None

5. Key Decision?

No

6. Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?

No.

7. Executive Director's Recommendation

It is recommended that further consultation takes place with a range of stakeholders including children and young people, voluntary organisations, service providers, Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, schools, elected members, managers and staff on the proposal for the DYC to be disbanded and replaced with a strategic network developed around the current school council and other structures.

The draft timeline for further consultation has been provided in Appendix 1.

Jane Parfremment
Executive Director for Children's Services

Appendix 1: Timeline for the consultation is detailed in the table below:

Date	Action
25 November 2019	Submission of draft cabinet report to SMT for approval to submit to Cabinet
28 November 2019	Cabinet paper put on circulation for Cabinet meeting on 16 January 2020
16 January 2020	Cabinet meet to consider request for approval to consult
24 January 2020 to 17 April 2020	Consultation period (options generation)
11 May 2020	Analysis of responses to consultation and development of recommended approach
Late May 2020	Cabinet paper put on circulation for Cabinet meeting on TBC July 2020.
Early July 2020	Cabinet meet to consider outcome of consultation and approve implementation of preferred option
1 August 2020	Implementation phase begins