

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

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| Report to: | Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | 11 September 2015 |
| Subject: | Direct links with young people through Youth Cabinet |

Summary:

Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet is looking to develop some structured channels for sharing of views with, and seeking support from, decision-makers at Lincolnshire County Council particularly the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (CYPSC). This report sets out some proposals for working more closely with the Youth Cabinet. This will allow Lincolnshire young people to raise issues and share opinions about matters that are of concern to them as well as give feedback on relevant and timely issues under decision by Lincolnshire County Council.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to support the following proposals for working more closely with the Youth Cabinet:

1. Timely access to open reports (of relevance) due for presentation at CYPSC. These could be shared once available or a brief report written for the Youth Cabinet by the senior officer due to present at CYPSC.
2. The sharing of draft minutes with key items highlighted for feedback, allowing opportunity to comment directly with CYPSC. Equally the Youth Cabinet would welcome comment to items on its agenda.
3. Access to a formal channel to request consideration of occasional business before scrutiny committees. This might include other committees e.g. Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee.
4. Open to invitations to attend occasional Youth Cabinet meetings (currently held Saturdays around the county). CYPSC may also wish to request attendance by the Youth Cabinet at its meetings. For any extraordinary meetings a small meeting is preferred rather than attending larger adult meetings.
5. Open to the idea of work experience opportunities (shadowing) for Youth Cabinet members either as part of school based learning or holiday experience. This can be shared with senior officers and locality teams for a wider experience of Children's Services.

1. Background

Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet is the county's young people's forum, presently with 12 Members. There are three Members of the Youth Parliament (UK Youth Parliament) who are members of the Youth Cabinet. Meetings move around the county with local schools invited to send representatives who are asked to feed back at their next school council meeting.

The Youth Cabinet wished to look at stronger links with decision-makers as part of last year's Takeover Day in November. However, this did not take place but Stuart Carlton, Assistant Director – Children's (Lead Early Help), asked for a report to be brought to Children's Services Executive Departmental Management Team (DMT) based on a discussion with the Youth Cabinet which took place at its February 2015 meeting. The report was discussed at the meeting of the Executive DMT on 29 May 2015, who was supportive in principle and suggested it went before the CYPSC pre-meeting on 17 June where the proposition was well received.

Currently Lincolnshire has an unstructured, informal approach regarding links with Youth Cabinet representatives occasionally asking for meetings with decision-makers. This has included Cllr R G Davies attending a lunch discussion with the Youth Cabinet last November and two representatives meeting with Cllr M J Hill in February 2015. More recently one of the Youth Cabinet members attended the bus operators' meeting which is being followed up with questions and proposals for Cllr R G Davies' consideration.

The Youth Cabinet welcomed the discussion about closer links to decision-makers. It was keen to engage further but also cautious of recommendations that might place too high a demand on its members. The Youth Cabinet currently meets on Saturdays for example, as time is pressured during school week days, given travel distances and other commitments.

Other local authorities in the region have a range of engagement approaches and some examples are given below.

- Dudley has a similar approach to Lincolnshire and is also interested in ways to improve communication between their youth council and decision-makers and how Lincolnshire moves forward.
- Staffordshire has meetings 4 times each year where Staffordshire Advisory Body (SAB), the county youth forum, meets senior officers and Cabinet members. Both SAB and the Council can raise agenda items.
- Leicester City Youth Council has two seats on Scrutiny with full voting rights.
- Derbyshire Youth Council (DYC) has direct links with Elected Members. Elected Members are invited to (and usually attend) DYC conferences. DYC is asked to send all conference minutes / notes to the Council's Cabinet for its information and to ask for support with support staff having regular briefings with Elected Members. There is increasingly more two way communication and DYC has just been given its own office on the Elected Members corridor in order to acknowledge its status. DYC is also invited to Derbyshire's full council meeting to present its work.

In February 2015, the Youth Cabinet discussed a number of possible ways to increase communication and engagement including:

- invitations to formal meetings with a commitment to attend (two-way)
- invitations to informal meetings like the lunch discussion with Cllr R G Davies
- planned meetings between the Youth Cabinet and decision-makers, perhaps coinciding some meetings to include any overlap agenda/interest
- Youth Cabinet seats at CYPSC
- opportunities to schedule issues to agendas
- sharing minutes (with comment and feedback)
- writing short reports to committees, including CYPSC, for consideration
- regular communication with your local councillor or buddy councillor on CYPSC
- work experience opportunities
- video-conferencing opportunities (issue of confidentiality was discussed)
- working together on a particular issue or project
- social media

The Youth Cabinet is not looking at attending meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, though it would not be against the possibility of occasional extraordinary meetings on shared business. It would, however, be interested in developing ways of sharing what young people think on key issues that affect young people in Lincolnshire. Having looked at the CYPSC work plan and knowing the Youth Cabinet business, a shared interest need not be onerous in terms of additional workload. Indeed the Youth Cabinet could be a strong consultative body on certain issues.

Timings will be important so that reports might be discussed at length with the possibility of wider student consultation on some issues through student council links before final decisions are made. The sharing of final reports would not be so purposeful.

2. Conclusion

The Youth Cabinet welcomes closer links to decision-makers and in particular shared areas of interest with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It is keen to engage further but also cautious of becoming over-committed. Proposals need to be workable for all parties so that it is beneficial without placing too high a demand on already limited time and capacity. The Youth Cabinet currently meet on Saturdays for example, as time is pressured during school week days, given travel distances and other commitments.

The Youth Cabinet was particularly interested in further exploring the following with CYPSC:

1. Early sharing of scheduled agenda items which are likely to be of interest to young people to allow time to gain young people's views on particular issues, and to feed into discussions and decisions.

2. Sharing of draft minutes with key items highlighted for comment (two-way process)
3. Access to a formal channel to present short reports with recommendations
4. CYPSC members and senior officers being open to invitations to attend Youth Cabinet meetings
5. Work experience opportunities for Youth Cabinet members either as part of school based learning or holiday experience.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

No policy proofing is required for this report.

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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