



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of the Priorities for Youth - 2008 onwards
Date:	Friday, 22nd February, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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1.0 Relevant background information

- 1.1 The Department of Education (DE) has recently written to the Chief Executive, letter dated 13th December (copy of which is attached at Appendix 1), to inform the Council of its intention to initiate a process to examine the Priorities for Youth within Northern Ireland which will build upon the current Strategy for the Delivery of Youth in NI 2005-2008.
- 1.2 Members will note that it is intended that the new Priorities identified through this process will be set within the exiting strategic framework rather than emerging from a review of the overall Strategy.
- 1.3 The Department's Youth and Community Relations Branch will be taking the lead on the review process. The DE has indicated that it intends to work with all stakeholders to identify the main issues currently facing youth work and to determine the priorities on which to focus, prior to and beyond the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority.
- 1.4 Accordingly, the DE has stated their intention to take forward a process of engagement and consultation over the coming months to ensure that the key issues relating to youth are identified and prioritised in the future.

2.0 Key issues

- 2.1 It should be noted that addressing the needs and concerns of young people within the city is high on Belfast City Council's agenda and the Council has already designated 'youth champions' (consisting of representatives from all political parties and relevant Council Departments) to address youth related issues.
- 2.2 There is a clear affinity between youth and other services currently delivered by the Council including, for example, community development, community safety, sport, leisure and addressing anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that the Council, in its response to the RPA Emerging Findings Report in December, had called for the transfer of youth services, following a review of needs and investment levels, to local authorities and their integration within the Council's wider community development agenda. This would enable the Council to engage young people in the management of anti-social behaviour and community safety issues.
- 2.4 As Members will be aware, the findings of the recent residents survey carried out by the Council indicated that the most compelling issues of concern to local residents are anti-social behaviour, youth causing annoyance and having enough activities for kids to participate in.
- 2.5 In fact, 23% of respondents had identified anti-social behaviour as the worst aspect associated with living within Belfast and 41% responded that the provision of activities for teenagers would most help to improve their quality of life. The fact that Councils are leisure and recreation providers, have responsibility for community safety, community development and local enforcement regulations, provides a compelling case for outreach youth services to be located within local authorities.

Development of a Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People

- 2.6 Members will note that an inter-departmental working group has been established to consider the development of an appropriate process for developing a Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People and an accompanying implementation framework. **A more detailed report will be submitted to the Committee in due course setting out the proposed development process and seeking the views of Members.**
- 2.7 The ongoing work undertaken as part of this process will enable the Council to take a more informed and evidenced base approach to engaging with and informing the pending consultation process to be brought forward by the DE and enable the Council to advocate and lobby on behalf of the citizens of Belfast.

4.0 Resource Implications

Financial and Human Resources

There are no financial or Human Resource implications contained within this report.

5.0 Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Correspondence from the Department of Education informing the Council of the initiation of a Review of the Priorities for Youth - 2008 onwards.