



Subject:	Notice of Motion : Youth Services – Responses from the Department of Education and the Education Authority
Date:	24 th March, 2017
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider the responses from the Minister of Education and from the Chief Executive of the Education Authority to the Council's motion on Youth Services.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked <ul style="list-style-type: none">To note the responses and take any such action as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>The Council, at its meeting on 1st February, passed the following motion on Youth Services, which had been proposed by Councillor McCusker and seconded by Councillor Attwood:</p> <p>"This Council notes with deep concern the proposed cuts in youth services in Belfast, which could see the loss of 131 posts in youth organisations.</p> <p>The Council recognises the important and vital contribution of our youth services to Belfast and believes that these cuts will have a major negative impact on local communities.</p>

The Council opposes these cuts in youth services and agrees to seek an urgent cross-party meeting with the Education Authority and the Minister of Education or senior Department of Education officials to raise our concerns and calls for the funding to be reinstated."

3.2 Responses have now been received from the Private Secretary to Mr. P. Weir, Minister of Education (Appendix 1) and from Mr. G. Boyd, Chief Executive of the Education Authority (Appendix 2).

3.3 The Private Secretary, within her response, confirms that the Minister has made it clear that, in terms of those organisations delivering extended, outreach and detached initiatives, no funding has been withdrawn, no decision has been taken to withdraw funding and there are no proposals to withdraw funding. It is pointed out that the Minister appreciates the uncertainty surrounding short-term funding streams which are additional to the core youth budget and the impact which that can have on workers across the sector. Whilst the overall budget available for youth services has not yet been agreed, the Minister has requested officials to ensure that, within the funding available, a longer term approach be adopted to prioritise access to and longer opening times for centres operating in areas of disadvantage or near interface areas. The response concludes by confirming that, due to the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections, Mr. Weir's role as Minister of Education would cease on 2nd March and that, due to his diary commitments, it would not be possible to schedule a meeting beforehand to discuss youth provision.

3.4 Mr. Boyd, Chief Executive of the Education Authority, within his response, confirms that the Education Authority has not proposed any cuts to youth services in 2016/2017 and is not planning any reduction for 2017/2018. However, he points out that the Education Authority does not have a budget allocation for 2017/2018 and, as a result, it has had to advise all staff on temporary contracts that their employment is not guaranteed beyond 31st March, 2017. That position has been reiterated within further correspondence, which confirms also that the Education Authority believes that the work undertaken by youth workers is a vital component in the support which the youth service provides to young people, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised. Mr. Boyd concludes by stating that the Education Authority is continuing to work with the Department of Education to find a solution to the funding issue and that, since the Education Authority agrees with the Council's position, as set out within the motion of 1st February, it does not believe that there is merit in having a meeting to discuss the matter. He did, however, confirm that he would be happy to meet with Members to discuss youth provision generally in Belfast.

3.5	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Response from Mr. P. Weir, Minister of Education Appendix 2 - Mr. G. Boyd, Chief Executive, Education Authority