

<b>2 July 2013</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Thurrock Youth Cabinet Representation</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Sue Green, Strategic Lead for Early Years, Families and Communities		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton – Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is</b> public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To make recommendations on the development of closer links between Children's Overview and Scrutiny and the Thurrock Youth Cabinet.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Thurrock Youth Cabinet serves to provide a voice for young people supporting consultation, engagement and wide representation. Best practice guidelines identify that this can be developed further through the strengthening of links between the Youth Cabinet and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The benefits of this would be to embed young people's voice at the heart of decision making processes on services for children and young people and to support elected members in discussions regarding key issues relating to young people.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1.1 That the Chair extends an invitation to the Youth Cabinet to send representation when relevant items are included on the agenda for a meeting, in line with the agreed work plan of the Committee.**
- 1.2 That the Members nominate a Youth Voice Champion to act as the link elected member with the Youth Cabinet.**
- 1.3 That the Youth Cabinet presents an annual report on activities and impact of their work to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1 The Thurrock Youth Cabinet was established in 2006 and serves to provide a voice for young people aged 11-19 years. It aims:**
  - To act as a link between Thurrock Council, its key partners, the wider community and young people in Thurrock.

- To promote the views of young people in Thurrock and to represent their views to Thurrock Council, its key partners and the wider community.
  - To encourage and initiate communication between young people in Thurrock and local and national government.
- 2.2 Thurrock Youth Cabinet membership consists of 28 members from schools and youth groups and a route for young people not elected by such groups to ensure the diversity of representation.
- 2.3 The Youth Cabinet has supported the development of services locally through providing comment on key strategies, undertaking consultation with young people on service provision and supporting initiatives such as T Fest and working with Thurrock Trading Standards to help stop retailers selling age-restricted goods (cigarettes, alcohol, etc.) to under-age purchasers.
- 2.4 Thurrock Youth Cabinet have been involved in some key consultations and shown they can mobilise young people’s involvement, most recently on the Health and Well Being consultation where 420 responses were received to the Young People’s survey in comparison to the wider survey that attracted 265 responses.
- 2.5 A regular feature of the Youth Cabinet is to debate topics and issues relevant to young people linked to Government and local agendas.
- 2.6 From the Thurrock Youth Cabinet there is an opportunity to represent the views of Thurrock on a national basis through the UK Youth Parliament and Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) and Deputy Members of Youth Parliament (DMYPs) and we have local representatives on these groups.
- 2.7 This paper seeks to explore and make recommendations on how the ‘youth voice’ can be further developed and links with elected members can be further supported.

**3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:**

- 3.1 The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People’s Well-being under Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 relates to local authorities’ duty to secure services and activities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, to improve their well-being, notes that:

*“Local Authorities must take step to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them... They should establish and maintain structured arrangements for doing so”.*

- 3.2 The British Youth Council, who are funded by Government to ensure Young People can influence public decision making at a local and national level, take

this a stage further and provide indicators of good practice on effective Youth Voice Vehicles and on the issue of assessing power and influence, it highlights as best practice:

*The Youth Voice Vehicle (Youth Cabinet) and/or associated young people's organisations have a clearly articulated role as a partner in:*

- *All aspects of commissioning services for young people*
- *Grant aid decisions for youth facilities*
- *Scrutiny/review of council services*
- *'Youth-proofing' new policies*
- *Shadowing Cabinet members and senior council officials*

*The local authority identifies a 'Youth Voice Champion' at elected member level to meet regularly with the Youth Cabinet and be a first point of contact for Youth Cabinet strategic concerns.*

- 3.3 The Youth Cabinet fulfils a part of the functions outlined particularly with regard to commissioning of services for young people and grant aid discussions. Their involvement in consultation and discussions regarding key strategies also helps to 'Youth- proof' policies and strategies.
- 3.4 With regard to the scrutiny and review of Council services and shadowing Cabinet members and senior council officials, there are opportunities to enhance this through closer links between Children's Overview and Scrutiny and the Thurrock Youth Cabinet.
- 3.5 The benefits of this would be to embed young people's voice at the heart of decision making processes on services for children and young people and to support elected members in discussions regarding key issues relating to young people.
- 3.6 Advice from Democratic Services highlighted that this could be achieved through the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee extending an invitation to the Youth Cabinet to send a representative when relevant items are included on the agenda. With this model young people could, with the agreement of the Chair, be invited to speak at a meeting and therefore engage in the debate regarding them.
- 3.7 In addition members of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee could nominate a Youth Voice Champion to act as the link elected member with Youth Cabinet.
- 3.8 If in due course members felt that this arrangement should be formalised then further exploration could also be given to formally co-opting representation from the Youth Cabinet. Although any such arrangement would not see voting rights being conferred, this would need to be explored fully in line with the provisions contained within the Council's Constitution as it would require a change to the terms of reference of the Committee. Any such proposal would

require consideration by the Constitution Working Group before being considered by the Council.

#### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1 These recommendations are made to further develop the 'Youth voice' in Thurrock and support improved links with elected members.

#### **5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 Consultation with members of Youth Cabinet was developed as a part of the self evaluation completed with the British Youth Council and ongoing discussion with key members of Youth Cabinet.

#### **6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 6.1 These recommendations support the following Council priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity.
2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity.
3. Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities.

#### **7. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Stephen Abrahall**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652217**  
**Sabrahall@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no financial implications to the recommendations being made.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
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**Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk**

Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 9 of the Council's Constitution enables an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite witnesses from outside Thurrock Council, such as residents, stakeholders and people from other parts of the public sector to attend to give a presentation, discuss issues or answer questions. Should members wish to extend this arrangement to consider formally co-opting representation further consideration to the Constitution will need to be given.

The recommendations given in this report support the local authority in meeting the duties imposed by S507B of the Education Act 1996. The section

requires that the Authority must, 'so far as reasonably practicable, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to –

- a) sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities; and
- b) sufficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

There is statutory guidance issued under the section, referred to in the body of the text, and entitled Statutory Guidance on Positive Activities.

The Council is also under a duty imposed by s149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty to have "due regard" to:

- A The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the EqA 2010 (*section 149(1)(a)*).
- B The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (*section 149(1)(b)*). This involves having due regard to the needs to:
  - remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it (*section 149(4)*); and
  - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Section 149(6) makes it clear that compliance with the PSED in section 149(1) may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under the EqA 2010 (this includes breach of an equality clause or rule or breach of a non-discrimination rule (*section 149(8)*)).

(*Section 149(3), EqA 2010.*)
- C The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (*section 149(1)(c)*). This includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding (*section 149(5), EqA 2010*).

Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
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The recommendations in this report strengthen diverse representation in decision making and debate with regard to services for young people. The Youth Cabinet represents the diverse community of young people in the Borough and by further developing the youth voice through links with the Youth Cabinet there is opportunity to support the local authority strategy to listen to the views of children and young people.

### 7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

- None

**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Appendix 1 - Thurrock Youth Cabinet Constitution

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