



<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast City Youth Council update
<b>Date:</b>	13 June 2023
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kelly Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide an update on the operation of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC)</li><li>• Seek agreement that the next two scheduled meetings of the Youth Council and P&amp;C Committee be cancelled</li><li>• Seek agreement from members that youth champions from each party will meet with the existing cohort of the BCYC over the summer months.</li><li>• Seek agreement for Officers to progress recruitment and selection for the 2023/25 Youth Council based on the outlined approach</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note the content of the report relating to the Youth Council.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek agreement that the next two scheduled meetings of the Youth Council and P&amp;C Committee be cancelled</li> <li>• Seek agreement from members that youth champions from each party will meet with the existing cohort of the BCYC over the summer months.</li> <li>• Agree for Officers to progress the recruitment and selection of the 2023/25 Youth Council by October 2023 using the process outlined in the paper.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Overview</u></p> <p>Belfast City Youth Council (formerly known as Belfast Youth Forum) is the youth participation structure for Belfast City Council and will celebrate its 17th year this year. Belfast City Youth Council is made up of 40 young people aged 13-18 from across Belfast. Each group normally serves a term of 2 years.</p> <p>The Youth Council meets with People and Communities Committee 4 times per year to discuss their work and feedback to members.</p> <p>Members also agreed that each political party would appoint one of its members to be a Youth Champion, to take a leadership role in working and engaging with the Youth Council on issues and/or motions which relate to young people.</p> <p>The Youth Council is facilitated by the Young People’s Co-ordinator, a new post holder, Stephen Mulholland was appointed in November 2022.</p> <p>Members of the BCYC normally meet twice monthly – usually in-person in City Hall. The Youth Council work on a range of campaigns of their choice. They are also actively involved in responding to requests for their participation in policy development within Council and external organisations.</p> <p>Previous campaigns include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty: It’s not a choice</li> <li>• Elephant in the Room – research into mental health and young people</li> <li>• Any Use? – research into Relationship and Sexuality Education in Belfast</li> <li>• Heads Up – Mental Health Advocacy Toolkit</li> </ul>

3.2

- Minor Choices, Major Voices – research into the views and experiences of BAME young people living in Belfast

Engagement with 21- 23 BCYC Cohort

There have been a number of challenges that have impacted on the active participation of the current Youth Council and this has limited their ability to fully experience the role and deliver on projects. These include;

- Covid-19 restrictions meant that staff and the youth council could not actively engage with young people, schools, and service providers during this time. The current Youth Council formed when Covid restrictions were still in place. Access to suitable rooms in City Hall and other facilities was limited, as was face to face contact. Most of the engagement with the members was via online platforms which made it difficult to develop relationships and identify priorities and plans for the new cohort.
- The Young People’s Co-ordinator post was vacant for a significant period of time and the lack of a dedicated resource to support the work of the newly recruited youth council has had an impact on their ability to develop campaigns. Most of the work in this term has been focused on engaging the group, building relationships and providing training, information and support to allow members to fulfil their role as members of the Belfast City Youth Council.
- There has been a gradual decrease in the number of Young People participating in Youth Council meetings although the new co-ordinator has undertaken intensive work to build relationships and gain commitment from youth council members. Unfortunately, despite this work there are only 10 regular participants.

3.3

Due to these issues members are asked to agree that the next two scheduled meetings of the Youth Council and P&C Committee be cancelled. These were due to take place on 26<sup>th</sup> June and 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The next scheduled meeting after this is 18<sup>th</sup> December and if recruitment happens as planned this will be the next meeting with BCYC and P&C Committee.

3.4	<p>In order to ensure engagement between the BCYC and elected members, members are asked to agree that youth champions from each party will meet with the existing cohort of the BCYC over the summer months. Officers will make contact with each party to confirm their nominee.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Recruitment</u></p> <p>The recruitment process for the Youth Council 2021-23 opened in October 2021. 40 young people covering the 10 DEAs were selected following an application and interview process.</p> <p>As the time frame for this cohort is coming to an end, officers are seeking approval to run the recruitment process again from October 2023 and to use the same approach as in previous rounds.</p> <p>There are a total of 40 places available in the youth council, 4 for each DEA. In previous recruitment rounds current members were able to continue as members. Although this limits the number of new places available for recruitment it ensures continuity of membership. Given that this current cohort have been impacted by Covid restrictions and staff vacancies within Belfast City council it is recommended that current members who wish to do so are permitted to remain on the youth council.</p> <p>The recruitment process will be advertised through the following means;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular social media posts promoting the recruitment drive by both BCC and BCYC.</li> <li>• Eshot sent to all on BCYC mailing list.</li> <li>• Specific contact made either by email or telephone to the following stakeholders; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a range of youth and community groups who operate either city wide or at a local level, these include EA, NI Youth Forum, NI Commissioner for Young people (NICCY). A detailed list of organisations can be provided on request.</li> <li>○ post primary schools in the city.</li> <li>○ Belfast city council colleagues who are in contact with young people, youth workers or youth groups in Belfast who may be interested in applying.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.6	<p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>Existing Youth Council members will work with the Young People's co-ordinator to identify lessons learnt and put in place key steps to take when recruiting and strategizing the youth council for the 2023-25 period. This will include developing a revised Terms of Reference</p>

	<p>which outlines the role of Belfast City Council and the BCYC members in supporting the work of the Youth Council.</p> <p>Over the summer months the youth council will prioritise outreach with youth providers and youth services to promote recruitment and ensure that the Belfast city youth council works collaboratively with other forums and networks which have been established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September:</b> Publicity campaign on Youth Council recruitment</li> <li>• <b>Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September:</b> Online applications open</li> <li>• <b>Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October:</b> Online applications close</li> <li>• <b>Week beginning the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October:</b> Taster sessions for applicants</li> <li>• <b>Week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> November:</b> Interviews and selection</li> <li>• <b>Week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> November:</b> New young people appointed and induction night with families.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.7	<p>All costs associated with the Youth Council have been agreed in the budget setting process. A dedicated Young People’s Co-ordinator has been assigned to facilitate the Youth Council.</p>
3.8	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None identified at present. Recruitment for the Youth Council seeks to ensure representation for young people from all sections of society, particularly relevant Section 75 groups and promotion and engagement is designed to support this.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None