



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Date:	Friday, 20th February, 2009
Subject:	Conductive Education for Children with Cerebral Palsy
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (extension 6325)
Contact Officer:	Mrs. Julie Lilley, Members' Liaison Officer (extension 6321)

Relevant Background Information

Correspondence has been received from the Mayor of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley, in respect of support for conductive education for children with cerebral palsy and, in particular, the ongoing funding crisis being experienced by the Buddy Bear Trust School, located in Dungannon, which is the only educational establishment in Northern Ireland currently delivering this type of education.

Lord Morrow has sought commitment from Councils to a number of actions including:

- influencing their Members nominated to Education and Library Boards to raise the profile of conductive education and the need to have adequate funding in place
- the signing of a petition to Government to provide leadership and direction in this area
- representation on a delegation to meet with the Ministers of the Office of First and Deputy First Minister and the Minister of Education to seek appropriate solutions to this problem.

Key Issues

Whilst the Council would be sympathetic to the needs of children with a disability and the rights of parents to be able access a range of educational options for their children, this is ultimately a function of Regional Government. Members should be aware that the First and Deputy First Minister are considering currently recommendations made by the Assembly commending conductive education, including financial assistance and support.

Additionally, given the vast number and range of very deserving charitable organisations and worthy causes in Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole, the Council must exercise discretion as to the support it is able to provide to such organisations and for this reason has a policy on the provision of assistance to non-profit making groups.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:

- write to the Mayor of Dungannon and South Tyrone to explain that, for the reasons outlined above, Belfast City Council is unable to commit to the actions requested by him.