



Subject:	Belfast Youth Forum update
Date:	4 June 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City & Neighbourhood Services
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	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 provide an update on the ongoing work of Belfast City Council's Youth Forum (BYF) as well as the Children and Young People Unit's 'Ur City 2' fund.
1.2	The paper presents the main developments in BYF work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BYF mental health campaign</li><li>• BYF poverty campaign</li><li>• BYF relationship and sexual health education project</li></ul>

1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BYF racism and diversity project</li> <li>• Young people’s rights conference</li> <li>• Formalising youth participation structures within BCC</li> </ul> <p>The paper also provides a brief update on Council’s ‘Ur City 2’ fund for Children and Young people.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposal to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Establish a joint engagement arrangement between the Belfast Youth Forum and the People &amp; Communities Committee, through the facilitation of up to 3 Special People &amp; Communities meetings per annum;</li> <li>(ii) Carry out a scoping exercise on the creation of a Youth Participation Charter (YPC) for BCC.</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>Committee is asked to note the main developments and updates in the paper, particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. BYF campaign updates;</li> <li>ii. Young people’s rights conference;</li> <li>iii. The Ur City 2 fund.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><b>Belfast Youth Forum</b></p> <p>BYF is the main youth participation structure of BCC and acts as the voice of young people within local government in Belfast. BYF is made up of 40 young people aged 13-18 recruited from each of the DEA’s across Belfast; members serve a two year term with the current cohort serving from September 2018- September 2020. Our BYF model is rights based and youth led, and every two years young people select campaign areas to work on and bring forward to decision makers within local and regional government.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Youth Forum Campaigns</b></p> <p>BYF members are currently working on the following campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poverty</b> (Poverty: it’s not a choice campaign);</li> <li>• <b>Mental Health</b> (Elephant in the Room campaign);</li> <li>• <b>Relationship &amp; sexual health education;</b></li> </ul>

- **Racism and diversity.**

Updates on each of the campaigns will follow in this paper.

3.3

### **Poverty**

The BYF poverty research report, 'Poverty: it's not a choice,' was launched in Belfast City Hall in May 2017. Young people made a number of recommendations in this report and in October 2018, BYF members took part in a poverty workshop with elected members and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. As a result of this workshop, the Chief Executive wrote to the Permanent Secretaries to request a meeting between them and BYF members in order to present the report and to discuss the recommendations for Government contained within it. The meeting has been arranged for 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 in City Hall. BYF work in this area will remain ongoing and an update on this meeting with Permanent Secretaries will be included in Autumn Committee report.

3.4

### **Elephant in the Room**

The BYF mental health research report, 'Elephant in the Room,' (EITR) was launched in Stormont in October 2018. Since the launch, young people have been continuing to work on the following:

#### **1. Engaging and lobbying decision makers around report recommendations**

BYF have:

- Presented their report to People and Communities Committee;
- EITR motion brought forward to full Council by Members;
- Met with Department of Education representatives including the Head of Curriculum;
- Met with CCEA;
- Presented EITR report to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health;
- Ongoing meetings with political parties in Council and at a regional level;
- Written to the Permanent Secretaries of Health and Education to request a meeting;
- Working on creating a cross party delegation to attend meeting with BYF members and the Permanent Secretaries of Health and Education;
- Presented to the All Party Working Group on Children and Young people in Stormont;
- Received written correspondence from Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary for the Department of Health;

- Requested a meeting with the Education and Training Inspectorate to ascertain how they assess mental health support in schools.

**2. Awareness raising campaign with young people:**

The Belfast Youth Forum are:

- Continuing to deliver youth led EITR awareness raising sessions to young people: since October, BYF members have delivered these workshops to over 300 young people;
- BYF, NI Youth Forum and the Children’s Commissioner Youth Panel have entered into a short term partnership and will work together from July 2019 to create a mental health campaign toolkit for young people that will launch in March 2020;
- A young people’s wellbeing day linked to EITR is being planned for October 2019 in Girdwood Community Hub.

**3.5 Relationship and sexual health education (RSE)**

BYF, Queens University Centre for Children’s Rights and Common Youth have entered into a working partnership to create a youth-led research project exploring young people’s views on the standard of their current RSE. From June onwards young people will work with a QUB researcher to create a research tool and during the summer months will conduct their research. The findings will be launched in November 2019.

**3.6 Racism and diversity**

BYF members will hold a workshop in City Hall in Autumn 2019 with young people from immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker communities in Belfast. The workshop will explore these young people’s experiences of living in Belfast as well as gathering their opinions on how best to promote multi-culturalism and diversity in the city. BYF will use the feedback from discussions on the day to create a report which they will launch in City Hall in early 2020. Dr Jonny Byrne from Ulster University is working with BYF to create workshop content and to analyse data collected.

**3.7 Young people’s rights conference**

On 4<sup>th</sup> April, BYF members held a young people’s rights conference in City Hall in partnership with the Lord Mayor and NI Youth Forum. Over 100 young people attended this conference and took part in youth-led workshops exploring young people’s rights in Belfast. Information collected at the event will be used to inform a discussion with elected members with a potential Notion of Motion to full Council in November to coincide with the

30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report will also shape a young people's event in City Hall to mark and celebrate this milestone anniversary. Preparatory work will commence on this during summer 2019.

3.8

### **Formalising our youth participation structures**

Following on from the December 2018 BYF Committee update, a commitment was made to formalise youth participation structures within BCC with a view to strengthening our participation offer to young people. Members are reminded of the Lundy Model of Child Participation, developed by Laura Lundy, Professor of International Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast, which has four key elements:

- i. **Space:** Children/young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
- ii. **Voice:** Children/young people must be facilitated to express their views.
- iii. **Audience:** The view must be listened to.
- iv. **Influence:** The view must be acted on, as appropriate.

3.9

As reported in Decembers' Committee paper, our current BYF model is widely regarded as a model of best practice in NI, both in terms of innovative practice with young people and in providing effective pathways for young people to express their views. In order for this practice to continue and develop, committee agreed it is important to reflect and seek ways to continually improve on our participation offer. In reviewing the model, the BYF excels in facilitating elements 1 and 2 (Space & Voice), however, there is a need to further develop and strengthen our structures in relation to the elements 3 and 4 (Audience & Influence). To this end, BYF members and Council staff have been exploring participation structures across Ireland and the UK and engaging with stakeholders to generate ideas for a new Council participation model.

3.10

As a result, BYF members suggest the following:

#### **1. Establish a formal mechanism to connect the YF to BCC Governance**

The YF propose that a suitable joint forum is established to allow for representatives of the YF to meet with elected representatives on a regular basis. Any such forum would meet up to three times per annum and it is suggested attendance will include young people, the People and Communities Committee

supported by relevant council officers. This regularised calendar of special P&C committee meetings will present a formal opportunity for young people to more effectively participate in and influence the decision making processes within BCC.

**a) Remit**

The meeting agenda and related discussions will be designed to both advise and assist the BYF in their participation and campaign work throughout the year, particularly in ensuring that:

- The BYF is formally connected to local decision makers and key stakeholders, particularly in relation to areas the BYF is campaigning on;
- BYF has an opportunity to influence decision making and service design and development that will affect young people in the city;
- Seldom heard young people are engaged in the process and contribute to the decision making process;
- The BYF is promoted and championed amongst members and in every BCC department;
- YPWG members are expected to be involved in BYF activities outside of meetings resulting in more meaningful engagement and participation.

**b) Attendance**

It is recommended that attendance is open to:

- Members of the Belfast Youth Forum (or agreed delegates);
- Members of People and Communities committee
- BCC Young People's Coordinator;
- A senior City and Neighbourhood Services officer;

The formal link to the People & Communities committee will facilitate continuity of conversation from meeting to meeting. The BYF should also endeavour to achieve consistent attendance of representatives is so far as possible across the duration of a full BYF term (two years). It is also envisaged that BCC officer representatives remain the same throughout a BYF term.

It is suggested that, relevant to the particular needs of BYF work, invitations to attend any meeting could be extended to other elected members and to representatives from key local agencies who have a remit in relation to a particular BYF campaign. These would change according to the area of work the BYF are focusing on at any given time. Examples of other agencies include the Education Authority, Public Health Agency or the voluntary youth sector.

**c) Benefits**

The benefits of establishing a regular series of special meetings of the P&C committee focusing on Young People's issues include:

- Strengthening the networks by which young people can engage with BCC decision makers;

- Improved lines of communication between young people and decision makers;
- Fulfilling our Article 12 UNCRC responsibility to include young people in the decision making process;
- Evidencing that we are making a difference and impact;
- Building the profile of BYF within BCC;
- Engaging with young people in a meaningful way, which is likely to lead to better service development and delivery, improved outcomes and greater agency.

Permission is sought to begin work to establish a calendar of special meetings of the P&C committee in line with relevant council protocols. If permission is granted, work will begin on creating a briefing paper for Members with an outline of agenda items, related time-frame, etc.

3.11

## **2. Youth Participation Charter**

BYF staff and young people are currently scoping options to develop a youth participation charter for BCC. It is envisaged that this charter will:

- Define participation;
- Outline the principles of youth participation;
- Create a checklist for participation;
- Be endorsed and signed up to by each Council department and political party;
- Track outcomes and evidence impact of effective youth participation.

Work in this area is ongoing and permission is sought to carry out a scoping exercise with a view to reporting back to Committee at a later stage.

3.12

## **Ur City 2 2018/19**

The UrCity2 programme involves a linked city initiative for children and young people which has been formulated and delivered in conjunction with the 14 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships (NRPs) in Belfast. Relatively modest amounts of funding, that is, up to £5,000, are made available to each of the NRPs to enable them to give impetus to programmes or projects that have been identified as priorities within their action plans but for which funding is not otherwise secured. We have rolled out the 18/19 funding to all 14 NRP's and monitoring is now completed.

3.13

## **Ur City 2 2019/2020**

Ur City 2 applications for 2019/2020 closed on 27<sup>th</sup> May and applications are currently being assessed. An update on how this year's money has been allocated will be presented to Committee in September 2019.

3.14	<u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u> There are no financial or resource implications.
3.15	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no equality or good relations implications or rural needs assessment is required.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	N/A