

County Council – 13 March 2014

Consideration of the Petition in Respect of Youth Services

Recommendations

That Council:

1. acknowledges and debates the petition in respect of the Youth Service which, given the number of signatures, has triggered the Council's Petition Scheme.

Background

The County Council has received the following petition:

We the undersigned petition Staffordshire County Council to reconsider and reverse its proposal to remove its Staffordshire Youth Service from the delivery of youth provision and of the closing of youth centres in Staffordshire.

The County Council proposes to save £4.5 million by ceasing to directly deliver youth services. This would have a devastating effect on young people, parents, carers, communities in which young people live, study, volunteer and work in, public and voluntary organisations who work in partnership with the Staffordshire Youth Service.

Staffordshire Youth Workers are skilled, professional and experienced people who care about young people and make a difference to people's lives. What the County Council are proposing will destroy a much needed service.

The petition consists of a paper petition totalling 15,691 valid signatures and 2 e-petitions with a total number of signatures of 627. The overall number of valid signatures is hence 16,318. Under the Council's Petition Scheme any petition that exceeds 5,000 valid signatures automatically triggers a debate at the next available Council meeting. To be a valid petition it must clearly state the issue and clearly set out individual signatures and addresses. To ensure the debate is prompted by those that are directly affected by the service or pay Council Tax in Staffordshire then only those people who live or work within Staffordshire are counted as part of the total for the purposes of the scheme.

Structure of the Debate

The structure of the debate is set out in the Council's Procedural Standing Orders. A lead petitioner will be entitled to speak at the start of the debate setting out the background to the petition and what those signing the petition

ask of the Council in terms of action in response to the issue. The petitioner will have 5 minutes to present the petition.

After this Council will have the opportunity to debate the issue. 15 minutes is set aside for the debate although this may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman.

The next stage following the debate at Council is to either summarise a response to the issue at the meeting or refer issues to Cabinet for their consideration or to the relevant Select Committee.

Council needs to be clear that given the timing of the petition no final decision has yet been taken on Youth Services. That decision will be taken at Cabinet on the 19 March 2014. This provides an opportunity for the debate and petition to inform the final decision, alongside the impact assessment and wider consultation exercise that will be considered by Cabinet. It also means however that the Cabinet Member isn't in a position to give a definitive response to the decision that may be taken at Cabinet, as it will have not been taken at the point of the debate.

Council is also asked to note that the proposals and outcomes of the consultation will be scrutinised by the Safe and Strong Select Committee on the 17 March prior to the decision being taken.