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**YOUTH MATTERS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Chris McEwan, Children's Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. This report advises Cabinet of the Government's Green Paper 'Youth Matters', a consultation paper which sets out proposals for the development of an Integrated Youth Support Service. The report also includes proposals for a response to the consultation.

**Information and Analysis**

2. On 18 July 2005 the Government published the Youth Green Paper, Youth Matters, addressing how we support and challenge our teenagers. Building on the ambition of Every Child Matters and its five key outcomes for all young people (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being), Youth Matters aims to radically re-shape services for young people.
3. A summary of 'Youth Matters' is provided in **Appendix 1**, comprising a paper used for member workshop sessions. The consultation period ends on 4 November 2005.
4. The consultation sets out a comprehensive package for the development of an Integrated Youth Support Service aimed at improving outcomes for all young people, with a particular emphasis on those who are disadvantaged. The paper is not just about providing more opportunities for young people but sets out a new strategy of challenges and support to young people.
5. While the paper focuses on teenagers (13-19) some of the proposals are also relevant to young people slightly older than 19 or younger than 13. The proposals in the paper reinforce wider policies steering young people towards the right study and employment options, encouraging healthy lifestyles, enriching the curriculum, increasing volunteering and recognising their achievements.

## Responses to the Consultation

6. The proposals in the Green Paper have been considered by Children's Services, Leisure and Arts Service, the Youth Service, Youth Offending Service and Elected Members who attended the workshop sessions on the 17 October 2005.
7. Overall the proposals are supported. However, there are some issues to respond to as follows: -
  - The potential financial implications of meeting the challenges posed by the Green Paper would not appear to be adequately addressed within the proposed resources.
  - The proposed national standards for positive activities are too broad and need to be more specific in their meaning. For example, what is meant by a wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences.
  - A 'personal health MoT' for 12-13 year olds is intended to support young people through the transition from primary to secondary school. In Darlington the transition from primary to secondary school is between the ages of 11 and 12 years. With regard to this terminology, there is a concern that failing a MoT, could have a negative impact on a young persons motivation and well being. It is, therefore, important that there is clarity about the purpose of the health check. For instance, it should address levels of physical activity and healthy eating habits rather than focusing on weight, height BMI etc. Also, what is meant by an MoT and how the results of these checks are to be used. Finally, consideration also needs to be given to what support would be provided to parents to help their child go through the process.
  - In terms of ensuring that the new lead professional role is successful in coordinating the delivery of targeted support it is important to have a clearly defined person specification signed up to by all the partners.
  - The benefit of keeping the Connexions brand was challenged in terms of whether service users understand what the brand means and whether a brand can be maintained following changes proposed within the Green Paper.
  - With regards the role of Extended Schools it is important that the services on offer from the school support existing provision within the locality rather than being in direct competition.
  - In considering what more could be done to ensure that reformed services are focused on achieving the improved outcomes, it is important that appropriate resources are available so that services can meet the diverse and challenging set of needs presented in the Green Paper and to acknowledge that some outcomes are time and labour intensive and cannot be achieved quickly and easily.
  - A theme emerging throughout the consultation is that there is a need for structures to involve young people and their parents in the decisions making process in a meaningful way.

- There was a view that young people should have access to basic provision and that rather than removing basic provision should a young person misbehave, they should not be entitled to additional rewards.

### **Legal Implications**

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

10. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

### **Decision Deadline**

11. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does represent an urgent matter as a response to the consultation is required by 4 November 2005.

### **Recommendation**

12. It is recommended that a letter be sent outlining the Council's response to the consultation as outlined within the body of this report.

### **Reason**

13. To enable the Council's response to Youth Matters to be considered.

**Cliff Brown**  
**Director of Community Services**

### **Background Papers**

- (i) The Government Green Paper – Youth Matters July 2005.

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