

October 2020

Response to Cllr Michael Jones' Notice of Motion on Post-16 Support Service to County Council on 18 September 2020

1. The Chairman of the County Council referred the notice of motion on the post-16 support service (see Appendix), submitted by Cllr Jones to the County Council on 18 September 2020, to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills for consideration.
2. The motion called on the Cabinet Member to reprioritise funding to enable the reversal of the decision taken at full Council in February to reduce the post-16 support service that provides interventions and careers guidance for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and to consider whether current staffing levels are adequate or should be increased.
3. The Cabinet Member met Cllr Jones on 8 October 2020 to discuss the motion; the Director of Education and Skills and Assistant Director Skills and Commercial Services also attended the meeting. During the discussion it was explained that the savings target for the post-16 support service had been £160,000 for the period 2020/22. It was explained that the £100,000 of savings made during this financial year had come solely from the removal of vacant posts from the service with no impact on or loss of service provision.
4. Members were reminded that the Post-16 team has been partially funded from a European funding programme which ends in December 2020. As the European fund is ceasing, the service has had to be restructured to reflect the fact that the County Council will no longer have this money or be running the ESIF project. It will be realigning the service to maintain front line intervention roles to support priority groups across the county.
5. The Cabinet Member and the service leads recognise that one impact of the pandemic is the reduction in the employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people. Consequently we have identified a need to retain resources within the post-16 service to enable support to be offered to young people and to work with them to avoid an increase in the number becoming NEET.
6. It was explained that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills supports the proposal that the £60,000 saving scheduled for 2021/22 be removed and that this be accounted for within the work to finalise the 2021/22 budget. This will mean no requirement to save £60,000 from the post-16 support service budget for that financial year, enabling the focus to be on supporting young people and NEET prevention.
7. The £100,000 saving already made to the post-16 support service was necessary to contribute to the efforts made by all departments of the County Council to deliver a balanced budget. It was managed through the removal of vacant posts. Recognising the uncertainty caused by the pandemic for young people's options as they move on from school, the Cabinet Member is keen to avoid the further £60,000 savings to the Post-16 support service.

8. For these reasons the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is unable to support the motion and proposes to recommend that members do not support it at the County Council meeting on 6 November 2020.

Nigel Jupp

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

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Appendix: Notice of Motion on Post-16 Support Service

Background papers

None

Motion on Post-16 Support

This Council notes that the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted on the education of young people over the age of sixteen in this County over the last six months or so. Those who have recently taken A levels, GCSEs and BTec examinations have had a particularly stressful time due to changes in the way exams were graded which impacted on choices for onward study for some young people. For those who were planning on seeking employment or apprenticeships after completing their education, the situation is even worse due to the current state of the economy.

Now more than ever these students need support to ensure they do not find themselves Not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Moreover, given the likely long term impact of the effects of the pandemic on the economy, it will become even more important than ever for this Council to be able to provide support for future generations of school-leavers.

This Council therefore calls on the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to reprioritise funding to enable the reversal of the decision taken at full Council in February to reduce the post-16 support service that provides interventions and careers guidance for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and instead to consider whether current staffing levels are adequate or should in fact be increased.