

County Council - 18 September 2020

Agenda Item 7(d) - Notice of Motion from Cllr Michael Jones

Post 16 Support Service – Briefing Note

It is recognised that, for a number of young people undertaking examinations at the age of 16 this year, there have been a number of anxieties over the pandemic and interruption to the learning of many children. Schools have the statutory responsibility for guiding and advising students on career and learning pathways and have been fulfilling this duty throughout. The local authority's statutory responsibility for providing additional advice and guidance is very limited and the County Council has gone beyond its statutory responsibilities in this area with the provision of a team of careers advisers to provide supplementary advice and guidance over and above that provided by schools and colleges. For the last two years the Post-16 Support Service has had additional funding to support NEETs from the European Social Fund. This comes to an end in Dec 2020 and the County Council has had confirmation that no additional funding is available from this source after this date.

Officers have considered how to reshape the team once this funding comes to an end. Last year the Council considered a complete withdrawal from the service or a reduction of 50% of its staffing budget. Following discussion with the Cabinet Member and at the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, it was decided not to approve full withdrawal of the service but to manage savings through vacancies currently held whilst protecting the front-line services as much as possible. Savings have been made over 2020 accordingly.

In recognition of the challenges that are being caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and in looking at different ways to reshape the team, the Education and Skills Service has revised its plans and is proposing maintaining front line careers adviser roles at their current levels post ESIF, focussing our post ESIF work on more preventative interventions and alignment with priority vulnerable groups. Officers are proposing ceasing activities that are directly linked to the management of the existing ESIF contract and participation activities that are either not possible as a result of Covid, or not directly involved in interventions

The Education and Skills Service is seeking additional funds through different funding streams to support NEETs and will continue to actively pursue any funding opportunities that become available.

Given the unprecedented demands that Covid is placing on the overall Council budget and its statutory services it is suggested that this approach will safeguard a highly important, but non-statutory support service.

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