

Title of Report:	Youth Participation in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development
Date of Meeting:	20th September 2026
For Decision	For decision
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	Priority 2: Empowering and supporting our people
Outcome	A Council which reflects the diversity of our community and creates an inclusive culture where everyone can thrive
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture; Good Relations Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	Subject to the option selected and subsequent implementation planning.

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Immediate options range from approximately £5,000 to £68,000 annually. See Annex 2.
Included in Current Year Estimates	£5,000 within the existing budget for current Pupil Voice provision (Option 1 baseline).
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	1041
Staffing Costs	<u>Existing staff costs:</u> Option 1: no additional costs; option 2: £3,000; option 3: £4,600; option 4: £6,900 <u>New staffing costs (option 4) included in figures above, circa</u> £25,500 - £27,000

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	n/a

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.
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Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	yes	Date: 06.10.26
	EQIA Required and Completed:	no	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	yes	Date: 06.10.26
	RNA Required and Completed:	no	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	no	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

This report presents the findings of the Youth Participation Feasibility Study and seeks Council's consideration of four immediate options. It also identifies two longer-term development scenarios which are not proposed for implementation at this stage.

2.0 Background

A Notice of Motion was tabled in June 2025, in relation to the establishment of a youth council. The motion asked Council to work with Youth Services and local schools to explore a Youth Council or similar mechanism that would empower young people, strengthen civic and democratic engagement, and ensure their views inform issues affecting them.

Officers subsequently commissioned the Youth Participation Feasibility Study arising from the motion. The study examined not simply whether to create a Youth Council, but how Council could strengthen meaningful, sustainable and inclusive youth participation within existing organisational capacity.

The study drew on stakeholder and expert interviews, comparative research, a survey of 60 local young people aged 12-21, assessment of financial, operational, safeguarding, rural accessibility and Section 75 considerations, and an elected members' workshop.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 Youth Participation Already Exists

Youth participation is already established through the Council's Pupil Voice programme and the EA-led Youth Voice structure. The main gaps are coordination, links to Council decision-making, feedback to young people, dedicated Council capacity, and rural transport and accessibility.

Responsibility for statutory youth work provision rests with the Education Authority Youth Service. Council's role is therefore to strengthen its own civic engagement with young people and connect existing participation routes more consistently to Council consultations and decision-making, rather than duplicate statutory provision.

3.2 Young People's Views

Of the 60 young people surveyed, 43 answered the participation questions; findings are therefore indicative rather than representative. Among respondents, 79% wanted greater influence in local decisions, 86% wanted young people to help shape agendas and only 23% were aware of Youth Voice. The Glens, Bann and Benbradagh were under-represented, no responses were received from young people aged 22-25, and the survey did not include targeted outreach to young people outside education or to specific Section 75 groups. These limitations should inform interpretation of the findings and the design of any next stage engagement.

4.0 Proposal

The study identifies four immediate options and two future development scenarios. The options are distinct choices, not stages in an automatic progression. Scenarios 5 and 6 are retained for strategic context and should be revisited only if evaluation demonstrates demand, affordability, organisational capacity and sustained elected member commitment. **Further detail on each option and scenario is provided at Annex 1, with the indicative financial breakdown at Annex 2.**

Category	Model	Purpose and status	Indicative annual cost	Decision implication
Immediate options for consideration	Option 1 Maintain current arrangements	Continues Pupil Voice and Youth Voice at their current level. Provides a valid baseline but does not address identified gaps.	Circa £5,000	Can be selected now if Council does not wish to commit additional resource.
	Option 2 Strengthen collaboration with Youth Voice	Formalises Council–EA collaboration, strengthens links to Council activity and elected member engagement, and builds on existing provision.	Circa £5,000 plus any additional costs agreed with EA	Can be progressed through structured discussions with EA, with responsibilities and costs reported back to Committee.
	Option 3 Time-bound third-party pilot	Tests a more coordinated model without an immediate staffing commitment and	Approximately £40,000	Can be commissioned as a defined pilot, subject to funding, procurement and

		includes formal evaluation and an exit or continuation decision.		agreed evaluation criteria.
	Option 4 Dedicated internal coordination capacity	Provides 0.5 FTE capacity, a small Youth Steering Group, stronger feedback and improved coordination between existing routes.	£50,500-£68,000	Can be considered now where Council wishes to invest in sustained internal ownership and capacity.
Future development scenarios	Scenario 5 Enhanced Council integration	Illustrates a more structured model with a full time officer, regular engagement, enhanced accessibility and formal reporting.	£100,000-£132,000	Not proposed for implementation at this stage. Revisit only following evaluation and evidence of readiness.
	Scenario 6 Fully youth-led participation model	Illustrates a fully youth-led advisory structure requiring substantial governance, staffing, safeguarding, transport and political commitment.	£128,000-£175,000	Not an immediate commitment or predetermined destination. Would require a separate future business case and Council decision.

5.0 Considerations and Identified Risks

Identified risk		Consideration and mitigation
Duplication or competition with Youth Voice	or with	New activity must have clearly defined roles, joint planning and routes into Council decisions so that it complements rather than fragments existing provision.
Unmet expectations and loss of trust	and	Council should explain what young people can influence, agree response times and provide accessible "You said, we did" updates, including reasons where proposals cannot proceed.

Insufficient unsustained resources	or	Affordability and the duration of funding should be confirmed before commitments are made, with any pilot including a managed exit and handover plan.
Equality, inclusion and safeguarding	rural and	Any option must include targeted outreach, accessible communications and venues, transport support, appropriate monitoring and agreed safeguarding responsibilities, with particular attention to rural and remote communities, disabled young people, minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ young people, care-experienced young people and those not in education, employment or training. Transport should be treated as an equality and accessibility requirement rather than an optional programme cost.
Insufficient elected member commitment		Any enhanced option depends on visible and sustained elected member engagement. Council should agree realistic minimum commitments and consider the workshop proposal that each political party nominate a Youth Champion.
No clear evidence of effectiveness		Any enhanced option should include a formal review point and measures covering participation and retention, representation across rural areas and Section 75 groups, councillor engagement, evidence of influence on decisions, delivery of “You said, we did” feedback, affordability and value for money.

6.0 Summary

The evidence favours a phased, proportionate approach that strengthens and connects existing participation routes rather than immediately creating a stand-alone Youth Council. Committee is asked to consider Options 1–4, with Scenarios 5 and 6 noted for longer-term review only.

7.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee:

1. Note the findings and recommendations contained within this report.
2. Consider options 1-4 as the approaches available for current consideration and determines its preferred immediate approach.

Annex 1: Detailed Description of Options and Future Development Scenarios

This annex provides the fuller detail behind the options summarised in the main report. Options 1-4 are available for current consideration. Scenarios 5 and 6 illustrate potential longer-term development and are not proposed for implementation at this stage.

Option 1: Maintain the Existing Approach ('As Is') This option would continue the existing Youth Voice and Pupil Voice arrangements at their current level, without significant additional Council resource or new structures. It is legitimate and cost-effective, but would not address the identified gaps in coordination, visibility, feedback, councillor engagement or connection to Council decision-making.

Indicative annual cost: circa £5,000.

Option 2: Strengthen Collaboration with Youth Voice ('Build on What Exists') This option would develop a clearer and more formal relationship between Council and the Education Authority through the existing Youth Voice structure. It would not create a new youth participation body. Council and EA would clarify their respective roles, what the partnership should achieve and how Youth Voice could connect more consistently with Council consultations, strategies and decision making.

It could include stronger elected member engagement, closer links with Pupil Voice and consideration of Youth Champions nominated by each political party. Its principal advantage is that it tests what can be achieved through existing provision before Council commits to additional staffing or a separate structure.

The detailed partnership, responsibilities, activity and any financial contribution would need to be agreed with EA and reported back to Committee.

Indicative annual cost: circa £5,000, plus any additional costs agreed with the Education Authority.

Option 3: Time-Bound Third-Party Pilot ('Test and Learn') This option would commission a third-party delivery agent for a defined pilot period to coordinate an enhanced programme linking Pupil Voice, Youth Voice, a small Youth Steering Group and elected members. It would strengthen feedback and follow-through and provide a practical test of a more coordinated model without an immediate staffing commitment.

The main advantages are lower employment risk and the opportunity to test effectiveness and value for money. The limitation is that external delivery would not, by itself, resolve the longer-term absence of dedicated internal ownership.

The pilot should include agreed evaluation criteria, a decision date and an exit and handover plan. Its review should consider continuation, adaptation, another delivery option or closure, without presuming a move to an internal post.

Indicative annual cost: approximately £40,000, based on current provision and an estimated third-party delivery contract.

Option 4: Strengthen Existing Participation through Dedicated Internal Capacity ('For' to 'With')

This option would build on existing arrangements rather than create a separate Youth Council. It would establish a small Youth Steering Group of 8-12 young people, enable young people to help shape Pupil Voice agendas and relevant Council consultations, strengthen feedback through a "You said, we did" mechanism, improve coordination between Youth Voice and Pupil Voice, and provide dedicated internal coordination capacity of 0.5 FTE.

This option most directly addresses the principal organisational gap identified in the study: the absence of dedicated internal capacity and ownership. A Council based role could connect participation to Council priorities, maintain relationships across departments and with EA, and ensure follow through does not rely on already stretched officers absorbing the work.

Indicative annual cost: £50,500–£68,000.

For noting - Future Development Scenario 5: Enhanced Participation and Greater Council Integration

This scenario illustrates a more structured and regular role for young people in influencing Council strategies, policies and priorities. It could include quarterly youth consultation workshops, a dedicated full-time Youth Participation Officer, structured councillor–youth dialogue, an annual youth participation report to Full Council, enhanced transport and accessibility support, and a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Education Authority.

It represents a substantially greater organisational and financial commitment than Option 4 and is not proposed for implementation at this stage. It should be revisited only if evaluation demonstrates demand, affordability, organisational capacity and sustained councillor engagement.

Indicative annual cost: £100,000–£132,000.

For noting - Future Development Scenario 6: Youth-Led Participation Model

This scenario illustrates a fully youth-led advisory structure, potentially including a constituted Youth Council of approximately 25–35 young people, geographic and thematic representation, dedicated staffing, facilitation and safeguarding, transport infrastructure, training for councillors and officers, formal recognition within Council processes, and governance and evaluation support.

It should not be regarded as an immediate commitment or predetermined destination. It could be considered where evaluation demonstrates sufficient demand from young people, organisational readiness, sustained political commitment and the resources required to support meaningful youth-led decision making. Any proposal would require a separate business case and future Council decision.

Indicative annual cost: £128,000–£175,000.

Annex 2: Indicative Financial Breakdown

The figures below are indicative annual costs intended to illustrate the relative scale of investment associated with each option. They are not implementation budgets; final costs would depend on delivery arrangements, staffing, procurement and the level of partnership support available from the Education Authority and other organisations.

Cost component	Option 1 Maintain	Option 2 Build on What Exists	Option 3 Pilot	Option 4 Internal 0.5 FTE	Scenario 5 Enhanced	Scenario 6 Youth-led
Pupil Voice programme	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£8,000– £12,000	£10,000– £15,000	£10,000– £15,000
EA Youth Voice contribution	No additional provision	To be considered with EA	£5,000	£5,000– £9,000	£5,000– £9,000	£5,000– £9,000
Existing staff cost –	Within existing budget	Additional £3,000 officer time pa	Additional £4,600 officer time	Additional £6,900 officer time	£11,500	£11,500
New/additional staff	No additional provision	No additional provision anticipated	Third-party delivery contract: c. £30,000	0.5 FTE: £25,500– £27,000	1.0 FTE: £51,000– £55,000	1.0 FTE: £51,000– £55,000
Transport and accessibility	No additional provision	Existing provision unless otherwise agreed	Within pilot specification/budget	£5,000– £8,000	£8,000– £12,000	£12,000– £18,000
Additional programme, communication, training and safeguarding	Existing provision	Existing provision unless otherwise agreed	Within pilot specification/budget	£5,000– £8,000	£18,000– £30,000	£35,000– £55,000

Contingency/major event	No additional provision	No additional provision anticipated	Within pilot specification/budget	£2,000–£4,000	£8,000–£11,000	£15,000–£23,000
ESTIMATED ANNUAL TOTAL	£5,000	£5,000 plus any additional costs agreed with EA	c. £40,000	£50,500–£68,000	£100,000–£132,000	£128,000–£175,000
Plus Existing staffing cost implications	Within existing budget	Additional £3,000 officer time pa	Additional £4,600 officer time	Additional £6,900 officer time	£11,500	£11,500

Notes: Option 1 reflects the existing Pupil Voice programme. Option 2 is shown at the same baseline cost, plus any additional costs agreed with the Education Authority; the form and level of any enhanced partnership would require agreement. The figures for Options 3-4 and Future Development Scenarios 5-6 are estimated total annual costs, including the Pupil Voice provision shown above.

Existing officer time costs are shown separately as an internal resource implication and are not additional cash costs within the estimated annual totals unless specifically identified through implementation planning. The estimates represent a full year of operation and do not include a separate set up allowance.