

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

21 JUNE 2018

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

NATIONAL DEMOCRACY WEEK 2018

1. Summary

This purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet about the inaugural 2018 National Democracy Week (NDW) organised by Cabinet Office and to outline our proposed campaign of activities and events for participating.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. Give their views about:
 - the Council's participation in the 2018 National Democracy Week;
 - the programme for the 2018 NDW campaign.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The Council has previously participated in European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) over a number of years. In September 2017, the Government announced the launch of National Democracy Week in the summer of 2018, which will supersede ELDW. All Councils have been asked to participate in NDW so Cabinet is being asked to give its views about our participation.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Note the contents of the report;
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DETAIL

1. Each October for the last seven years our Council has successfully participated in European Local Democracy Week (ELDW). We were the only UK local authority to be recognised for participating as a '12 Star City' – special recognition given to those who go the 'extra mile' promoting democratic participation and values in their area.
2. As a result of consistently achieving '12 Star City' status, the Council was given the honour of being asked to send a representative to speak at the 32nd Session of the Congress of the Council of Europe in April 2017. Cllr Ann McCoy went to Strasbourg on behalf of the Council and gave a speech about our involvement in ELDW and how we promote democratic values and participation.
3. In September 2017 the Cabinet Office announced that it would be launching a new annual week of action – 'National Democracy Week' (NDW) – to put the spotlight on democracy and boost democratic participation, especially amongst under-registered groups. This includes young people up to the aged of 32, but especially students and those aged 16 - 24 years old; people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds; private renters; tenants in social housing; home-movers; and people with disabilities.
4. As a result, we participated in ELDW for the final time in October 2017. Since then we have been actively involved in providing information and feedback to the Cabinet Office about the branding and the development of National Democracy Week.
5. Every council is being encouraged to organise events/activities for National Democracy Week. The official dates are 2 - 7 July 2018, however, activities and events will be running a month either side of this.

6. The main theme chosen by the Cabinet Office is the 'Suffrage Centenary', as we celebrate two significant anniversaries this year – 100 years since women won the right to vote and 90 years since women won equal voting rights to men.
7. The aim is to bring together organisations from across the public, private and charity sectors to ensure that everyone entitled to do so has an equal chance to participate in our democracy and to have their say.
8. A new website has been created – www.democracyweek.campaign.gov.uk allowing organisers to register their NDW events/activities. It has a 'Partner Pack' available for download which includes a range of digital resources – posters, leaflets, web banners, social media templates and NDW branding – so that local events/activities can be linked to the national campaign and increase their impact.
9. Cabinet Office has also launched a 'Democracy Awards' initiative to recognise individuals and organisations across the UK who are making an outstanding contribution to engage people in our democracy, particularly with under-represented groups. There are four categories:
 - i. Young Advocate of the Year Award
 - ii. Diversity Champion of the Year Award
 - iii. Changemaker of the Year Award
 - iv. Collaboration of the Year Award
10. Democratic Services has collaborated with Youth Direction to prepare a nomination for Liani Weston in the 'Young Advocate of the Year' award category of the Democracy Awards. She was the overall winner of the 'Young Person's Award' category in the Mayor's Civic Awards for 2016/17, and she is an active member of Stockton Youth Assembly and the 'Let's Take Action' group – making her an outstanding advocate for 'Looked After Children' in the borough and across the region. The closing date for nominations was Sunday 27 May 2018 and the winners will be announced during National Democracy Week.

National Democracy Week 2018 Programme

11. Democratic Services is seeking the views of Cabinet about the Council's participation in National Democracy Week 2018. We will be conducting 'business as usual' events/activities which fit in with the NDW theme and aims – raising awareness about how residents can make sure that their voice is heard and promoting voter registration.
12. We would use NDW branding and publicise them through our network of partners, social media and the Council website. They would include:
 - **National 'Suffrage Centenary' initiatives** (e.g. 'Vote 100'; 'EqualiTeas') – we will be raising awareness about them through the CESC e-mail bulletin to Head Teachers and Principals and promoting the online resources (lesson plans; assembly outlines; videos; quizzes) available to encourage participation by schools, colleges youth organisations and voluntary/community groups.
 - **UK Youth Parliament's 'Make your mark' Ballot** – gives a unique opportunity for young people aged 11-18 to vote for the issues that matter most to them and decide which ones Members of the UK Youth Parliament should debate and vote on to be their campaign for in 2019. We will work in partnership with Stockton Youth Assembly (SYA) and the MYP, Maisie Best, to encourage our young people to make themselves heard by participating in this national campaign. Schools/ colleges will be offered the loan of ballot boxes and screens to create their own polling stations. The top local issues could be taken up by Stockton Youth Assembly.

National Democracy Week 2018 Programme

- **‘Stand for what you believe in – Be a Councillor’ campaign** – is part of a national Local Government Association (LGA) initiative to raise awareness about the role of local councillors and the opportunity to stand as a candidate in future elections. We are promoting the campaign with internal/external partners to reach across the borough and help to raise the quality and diversity of the future candidates. The publicity features existing Councillors to promote the key message that ‘Councillors are ordinary people like you, so you could become one too!’
- **July’s Citizenship Ceremony hosted by the Mayor at the Town hall** – will be themed around NDW. Delegates and guests will be given a fun interactive presentation promoting the various ways that they can make their voices heard. This will include the role of the Mayor and Councillors, voter registration, voting and active citizenship. Many of the delegates are from BAME backgrounds, so we will be encouraging them to pass on what they hear to their family and friends.
- **‘Meet the Mayor’ and ‘Town Hall tours’** – we are liaising with the local mosques and Sikh temple to arrange group visits to the town hall. These will be used to raise awareness about the role of the Mayor, councillors, the ‘Be a Councillor’ campaign, the mayor’s Civic Awards, past and present uses of the Town Hall, and how to make sure their voices are heard. Tours are already booked in for a Refugee/Asylum Group, a school council and a group of Beavers/Scouts.
- **‘Getting Heard’ workshops** – we are offering these interactive workshops to community and voluntary groups (including the local mosques) to increase their knowledge, confidence and understanding of how to register to vote, vote and get involved in local decision making.
- **School Council Assemblies & Elections** – we are offering to support school council / student voice elections by providing ballot boxes, polling screens and assemblies – to promote the importance of voting, being on the register, the role of school councillors, and active citizenship within their school community;
- **Voter Registration** – we will be working with internal/external partners to promote voter registration across the Borough and raise awareness of the upcoming Annual Canvass. We will be specifically targeting under-registered groups through partners who work with them.
- **National Democracy Week web page** – we will be creating a new page to promote all of the above opportunities for participating, plus links to fun videos/animations explaining how democracy works in UK.

CONCLUSION

13. The NDW Programme will be delivered by follow our standard practice of:
 - i. collaborating with other Council Services (e.g. Communications; Registrars; Youth Direction) and external organisations / groups (e.g. Catalyst; schools and colleges; parish/town councils).
 - ii. involving the Mayor through her civic engagements; and
 - iii. maximise the use of existing activities, events and meetings in the democracy diary
14. Participation in National Democracy Week would be an extension of the work that we are already doing to increase registration amongst under-registered groups across the borough and democratic participation. It would also support our ongoing performance targets to maximise voter registration and accuracy of the voter register.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

15. The NDW Programme will make a positive impact across the community by promoting and providing opportunities for residents to make themselves heard and participate in the democratic process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. Costs will be met from existing budgets.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. These initiatives would contribute to the fulfilment of the Council's duties under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009; the Localism Act 2011; and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

RISK ASSESSMENT

18. The themes for National Democracy Week demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting their legal obligations as outlined above and thereby avoid any risks of failing to do so.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

19. The NDW Programme will increase the awareness, confidence and understanding about democratic participation. It will also include targeted work with groups who are statistically amongst the least likely to be registered to vote, or participate. As such the activities referred to in this report will impact on the following Policy Principles:
 - Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention
 - Developing strong and healthy communities

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

20. The report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

21. Consultation is not necessary, as the NDW Programme is borough-wide.

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Education related? No.

Background Papers None.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: All Wards.

Property None.