

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

SUMMARY

The report provides an update on arrangements for the election of the Member of the Youth Parliament (MYP) and establishment of a Youth Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee are asked to comment on the new model which will be implemented at the start of the next municipal year to tie in with the elections for the MYP.

DETAIL

Background

1. Through the PIC network a Shadow Youth Board (SYB) was established as a strategic initiative to ensure young people's views were represented within the Children's Trust Board. The young people involved were volunteers and not democratically elected. To date the remit of the SYB has been limited and not linked to the Council's decision making structures and scrutiny processes.
2. As part of the Youth Services EIT review, the Committee asked that the future involvement of young people on the Committee be formalised through the introduction of appropriate engagement mechanisms.
3. For some time there has been a recognized need to establish a new structure establishing a more representative and democratically elected Youth Assembly. The new structure would
 - Work with young people directly in youth led action projects
 - Actively encourage youth involvement and community change
 - Involve young people in innovative and accessible ways, take part in consultations to guide the work we do as a Council
 - Provide information to young people about our projects, the work of the Council and other youth services
4. Training and support would be provided in order to enable the young people involved to take part in new opportunities.

It is proposed that the new structure:

- would replace the current Shadow Youth Board with a more representative "Youth Assembly" made up of representatives from a range of existing youth forums (e.g. school councils, BME, young carers, sixth forms, special needs reps and the UK Member of the youth parliament;

- that the MYP should be a representative on the youth assembly so that young people's voices in the Borough are heard on local, regional and national level;
- local youth elections for YMP and the Youth Assembly are held with support from Democratic Services, electoral services;
- IYSS to work closely with Democratic Services to include a broader referral process for future MYPs, closer links with the schools and develop an action plan to work towards a 2013 election option. This will also raise awareness in schools, colleges/ youth forums etc.

Guiding Principles

5. The British Youth Council have published a guide for staff, Councillors and young people involved in youth voice activities within the local authority. The guide sets out a toolkit for local authorities to test the strength of their youth voice arrangements underpinned by the following principles which should inform the involvement of young people in decision making:
 - Youth people have the *opportunity* to be involved in making decisions on what their involvement should be and which vehicle is used
 - Youth Voice Vehicle (YVV) should have a clear *vision and purpose* shared by young people and understood by the local authority and support providers
 - Local authorities should recognize the value of involving young people in decision making at a strategic level and make *sufficient resources* available to support their involvement
 - YVVs should be *inclusive* of young people from different backgrounds and with different needs and should ensure that their ways of working do not exclude or discriminate against specific groups
 - YVV should be *representative of the diversity* of the young people living in the local authority area
 - Adults involved in supporting, advising and liaising with YVVs should fully *understand and support the processes of young people's involvement*
 - Young people should be involved in developing and deciding on appropriate *resources, support and training* required to establish a productive environment for young people's participation
 - YVVs and local authorities should be *outward focused* and draw on good practice in other settings and organizations
 - YVVs and local authorities should regularly *access the impact* of young people's involvement to ensure that investment in young people's voice is making a difference to young people's lives
 - YVVs and local authorities should be able to *articulate the benefits* they have seen from involving young people in decision making
6. The self-assessment toolkit poses a series of questions with some indicators of best practice. Copy attached at **Appendix 1**.

The Model for Stockton

7. It is proposed that the youth assembly be established in line with guiding principles set out above and the indicators of best practice set out at Appendix 1 (with the exception that budgets and communications could be coordinated by the Council).
8. Membership will be drawn from 11 – 19 year olds (up to 25 year olds for young people with special needs). Representation would be drawn in the first instance from:
 - School Councils (secondary)
 - Sixth Forms and Colleges
 - Universal Youth Clubs
 - BME (via Cornerhouse)
 - Young Carers (via Eastern Ravens)

- LDD Representatives plus appropriate Advocacy Support (possibly via Special Schools but not mutually exclusive to one organisation)
 - LAC/ Care Leavers (via CiC Council)
 - Special Interest Groups
 - Member of the UK Youth Parliament
9. It is proposed that the Area Youth Boards are not retained under the new model and that their role is replaced by the new Youth Assembly; arguably the Youth Assembly will be more representative and can still have the capacity to facilitate area based youth work. Communications with Elected Members on the proposed new ways of working will be critical.
 10. Membership of the youth assembly would need to be kept under review with other groups/ bodies added to the membership as appropriate.
 11. It will be for each school and group to agree their own internal mechanisms for nominations to the youth assembly and we would suggest that appropriate democratic processes are in place to achieve this.
 12. It is proposed that Terms of Office would be two years in line with the term of office of the UK Youth Parliament member.
 13. Once established it will be essential that the youth assembly has a wider voice in community matters and the ability to feed into/ support the Council's decision making structures. This could be achieved in the first instance through:
 - An Annual Borough Debate – attended by the Elected Membership and appropriate stakeholders e.g. Health & Wellbeing Board and Police & Crime Panel representatives who would seek to establish necessary links in light of changes to for example the Children's Trust Board and support the establishment of appropriate priorities for the work programme for the forthcoming year including success measures to help monitor the impact of the work undertaken.
 - Closer links with Cabinet and Select Committees – For example, the Youth Assembly could be asked to comment on Council consultations, scrutiny reviews and undertaking consultations themselves around the priorities set.
 - Appropriate awareness raising and publicity within the Council and externally
 - An Annual Report at the end of each year setting out what has been achieved which could usefully be presented to the Children & Young People Select Committee as part of the annual overview meeting.
 - To encourage borough-wide recognition/representation it is proposed that the new My Place venue be adopted as the HQ for the revised Youth Assembly.
 14. Democratic Services would manage the development of the work programme and meetings, which would also enable stronger links to be established between the Youth Assembly and Council decision making structures, in addition to providing other support (e.g. induction and ongoing development). IYSS would continue to provide wider engagement and support to the young people involved.

Elections to the Member of the UK Youth Parliament

15. Our current MYP was appointed from young people in the Borough who had expressed an interest in being involved with the UK Youth Parliament. It is proposed that, in future, local youth elections for the MYP are organized by Democratic Services, Electoral Services.
16. Electoral Services will be developing detailed arrangements, in conjunction with IYSS and key partners, for elections to take place possibly in February 2013. These will follow a similar approach to any other elections. It is likely that this will involve:

- Publicity to invite young people to stand as a candidate (aged between 11 and 18 and living or attending a school within the Borough); nominations to be received by a deadline date
- Publicity via existing communication channels (e.g. school bulleting, IYSS programmes, social media)
- Two year term of office
- Leaflet/ poster publicizing candidates with short profile provided for each candidate
- Ballot papers to be circulated to participating schools and youth projects with consideration being given to electronic voting where possible
- First past the post voting system to be used with runner up elected as deputy

Next Steps

17. The Committee are asked to consider the new model and approach to the Youth Assembly and youth elections, prior to Cabinet consideration on 6 September. The Committee's comments will be verbally reported to Cabinet. Following Cabinet consideration, the proposed model and approach will be subject to consultation with young people and stakeholders.

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Background Papers: Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific

Property Implications: None