

North Somerset Council

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REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES POLICY & SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 17TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH SOMERSET DEMOCRACY PROJECT

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: ALUN DAVIES, POLICY AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel is requested to endorse, support and participate in the work of the project. |

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report describes a project to develop the understanding of and participation in democracy amongst young people in North Somerset. |

2. POLICY

There are no policy implications or requirements arising from this project. |

3. DETAILS

Background

3.1. Ellie Varley, a former student at Clevedon School, now studying politics at university, undertook a work-experience placement in July and August 2017 shadowing Councillor Ann Harley. Ellie has a keen interest in ensuring young people engage actively and positively in the political process. Councillor Harley is Chairman of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Panel (CYPS).

3.2. Ellie and Councillor Harley met with young people to explore the issues, and Ellie had separate conversations with other schools. It became clear that young people had a keen interest in political issues, but lacked real knowledge of how the political process worked and how they could participate and engage in it. Young people were particularly aware that significant decisions were being taken nationally and locally at present, which may affect their lives, and they wished to be involved in and understand the processes by which these decisions were made.

3.3. A meeting took place chaired by Cllr Harley and led by Ellie with officers from Democratic Services and the People and Communities Strategy & Policy Development Team. The outcome of this meeting is the project set out in the following paragraphs.

Project Purpose

3.4. The purpose of the project is to raise awareness amongst and inform young people of the political process, and how young people can participate and engage with it. This will include the workings of Parliament, North Somerset council and town and parish councils.

Project Scope

3.5. The project will seek to make all young people of secondary school age and above aware of the project. It will engage with the two local Members of Parliament, North Somerset Councillors and town and parish councillors. The project will ensure that a range of views and opinions are represented throughout its work, and does not seek to advance the programme of any political party either locally or nationally.

Project Outcomes

3.6. The outcome of the project is that young people in North Somerset are more aware of and understand the local and national political process, and more likely to maintain their registration to vote once they have attained the age of majority. Young people are to feel encouraged to attend and address Scrutiny Panels and Council meetings, to advance their views positively, and to participate in local and national elections. The outcome will be measured by an on-line survey following the project's conclusion.

Project Time-line

3.7. The project will deliver a series of activities over a week. These will include a mix of meetings and use of social media and the internet. The week proposed is 10th July 2018 as it is the penultimate week of the school year and the second week of university holidays.

Project Activities

3.8. The following suggested activities are expected to take place during the week:

- * Question time Event for young people with the two local Members of Parliament;
- * "You Set the Budget" event for young people with the Leaders of the district council political groups;
- * A DVD produced by young people explaining to young people about the political process including registration and voting;
- * developing engagement with town and parish councils to maximise the success of the project.

Project Resourcing

3.9. There is no budget for the delivery of this project. Limited officer time is available

from People and Communities Strategy and Policy Development Team and from Scrutiny Officers, on the basis that this work will support young people in influencing and engaging with decisions about services which affect them, and that it will also encourage registration to vote in this group. This is particularly important given the changes to registration which mean young people leaving home or attending university are at risk of not being registered under the Individual Electoral Registration rules.

Project Governance

3.10. The project is led by Ellie Varley with the support of Cllr Ann Harley. Alun Davies from the Strategy and Policy Development Team will be the lead officer, with limited support from Scrutiny Officers. There will be a steering group to oversee the project. The Steering Group will include those already named plus additional young people and other officers as relevant. The project will report to the Leader of the Council.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1. The project will actively work with schools and youth activities in North Somerset to inform and publicise the project.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no additional resources required to undertake this project, though members of the panel are encouraged to suggest any support outside council funds which may be available to ensure and enhance the delivery of these aims.

Costs

5.2. There are no costs for this project. Any meeting venues will be within Council premises.

5.3. Funding

No additional funding is required.

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no legal powers required for this project and no legal implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1. Any potential risks will be managed by the project's Governance Group.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The project will from the outset and through-out its work seek to fully address Equalities issues. The three special schools in the authority will be included as part of the

consultation with all schools, and their advice will be sought to ensure the events of the project are accessible. The Children in Care Council will also be fully involved.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

9.1. One of the outcomes of the North Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2015-19 is to “Enable young people to fulfil their potential”. Encouraging and enabling young people to understand and participate in the democratic process is an important aspect of supporting them to fulfil their potential.

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10.1. The option was considered of exploring the feasibility of setting up an ongoing engagement mechanism with young people, similar to previous Youth Parliaments. On reflection it was felt that without committed funding, that approach would be unlikely to succeed. Additionally, such groups have previously tended to reach only those young people with an active and already interest in political activism. This project has the advantage of potentially reaching and benefiting significantly more young people in a format which is more accessible to a wider range of attendees and will hopefully encourage their long-term engagement in the democratic process.

AUTHOR

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None at this stage