

Member Support Steering Group

13 September 2012

Report of the Assistant Director (Governance and ICT)

Local Democracy Week 2012

Summary

1. This report summarises the events and activities planned during Local Democracy Week between 15-21 October 2012, in support of raising awareness about the democratic process and the role of Councillors.

Background

2. For the first time in October 2009, the Council ran a series of coordinated initiatives around Local Democracy Week. Increasingly, these activities have involved schools, young people and looked to outreach into the community and link up with other services across the Council.
3. Members will recall that what Councils and Councillors do to demonstrate their commitment to holding community events in support of community leadership, has traditionally been a contributory factor towards achieving Member Development Charter Status with the newly formed Local Government Group (formerly I&DeA). The Council successfully achieved Charter status in September 2010.

Local Democracy Week Proposed Activities 2012

4. The following events/activities are being proposed so far for this years' Local Democracy Week taking place from 15-21 October 2012:

Meet the Lord Mayor/Mock Budget Council

Last year, Key Stage 2 pupils from Carr Junior School and Headlands Primary School's new school councils visited the Mansion House to meet the Lord Mayor, learn about his role as first citizen of the City and take a look around the Lord Mayor's official residence. The children tried on mini Lord Mayor and Sheriff's robes. They then spent some time in the Council Chamber taking part in a mini budget meeting, 'chaired' by the Deputy Lord Mayor. The children were highly participatory and very much enjoyed the experience of getting involved in deciding how the Council should spend its money locally.

This year, the Lord Mayor will host a similar event for Huntington Primary School and discussions are taking place with Education Services about structuring a mock Budget Council, chaired by the Lord Mayor, with secondary school children.

Youth Council Activities

Last year, a political speed dating event between members of the Youth Council and City of York Councillors was arranged to take place prior to the Youth Council's first meeting of the year. Young people were given the opportunity to put questions to the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, and a selection of Members.

Discussions are taking place this year in relation to the possibility for a similar event and to any other activities the Youth Council are planning. An update will be given at the meeting.

York Stories

Discussions are also taking place about the possibility of a selection of Councillors, perhaps Members of this Steering Group, getting involved in the York Stories project as part of the Local Democracy Week. York Stories is a community project for York 800 celebrations which aims to encourage people to tell and share stories that are personal and unique to the city of York. This would run as a continuing strand throughout the week.

Unearthing the stories behind the Guildhall Yard Excavation and Talking Tour of Guildhall.

A talking tour is planned during the week, if possible, with the collaboration of York Archaeological Trust (YAT). This year, the tour would focus on the discoveries from the recent dig of the yard

and put the building, as the seat of local democracy in York, into its historical context.

Question Time

Discussions are taking place about a potential 'Question Time' to be held at the University and involving a panel of Councillors. An update will be available at the meeting.

Mansion House Tours

As usual the Mansion House, as the official residence of The Lord Mayor of York (Chairman of the Council and the first citizen of the city), will be open for tours. Visitors will receive a guided tour and will be able to view key items from the civic collection on display including silver, paintings and furniture. ***Entry to the Mansion House is free to York Citizens and £5 to non-residents.***

Consultation

5. Democratic Services is again linking up with other Council Directorates (Adult, Childrens & Education, Communities & Neighbourhoods) in terms of activities aimed at supporting Local Democracy Week. Arrangements will be made, as usual with Marketing & Communications, to communicate effectively what the Council is doing across key community groups.

Options

6. Local Democracy Week is fast approaching, given it takes place between 15-21 October 2012. The Steering Group can comment upon the proposed range of activities outlined in paragraph 4 and reshape or agree them, accordingly and as permitted by time constraints.

Council Plan 2011-15

7. The aims of Local Democracy Week, in widening participation and involvement within and in the democratic process, accord with the underlying principles of the Council's Plan in making York an inclusive City, making sure that all citizens, regardless of race,

age, disability, sexual orientation, faith or gender understand, feel included and can get involved in York's decision making.

Implications

8. Staff resources will be required to support the events listed and will come from within Civic & Democratic Services, Electoral Services and other directorates as appropriate.

Risk Management

9. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the only risk associated with the contents of this report could be the failure to maintain Charter Status when it is reviewed if the Council were to be seen not to be demonstrating a commitment to supporting events which promote community leadership and raise community awareness about the democratic process.

Recommendation

10. Members are asked to comment upon the proposed range of activities for Local Democracy Week in the year of York 800.

Reason

11. In order to comply with the requirements of the former I&DeA Charter and to promote engagement in and understanding of democratic activity in the year of York 800.

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**Report
Approved**



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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None.

Annexes:

None