

Members Support Steering Group

1 July 2013

Report of Assistant Director, Governance & ICT

Local Democracy Week 2013

Introduction

1. Local Democracy Week is a national campaign to promote participation by local people in decision-making. It will run from Monday 14 October 2013 to Friday 18 October 2013. City of York Council supports the campaign by running a series of events throughout the week. This report sets out some proposed activities for a week long programme for the event and seeks Members' comments.

Background.

2. In the previous three years, Democratic Services have run a number of successful sessions in collaboration with Electoral Services, Civic Services and other teams across the Council. Previous events have been aimed at involving all sections of our community and have included:
 - Sessions with schools in the Council Chamber and Mansion House with the Lord Mayor;
 - 'Who, me, a Councillor?' (aimed at future prospective candidates)
 - Tours of the Mansion House and Guildhall;
 - York Councillor Stories;
 - 'Question Time' held at the University of York
 - Lectures in both the Mansion House & Guildhall
3. Feedback has always been positive, if attendance has been somewhat sketchy. In any event, these activities have

provided a firm platform from which to springboard more events this year.

Consultation

4. This Group is traditionally consulted on preparations and proposals for Local Democracy Week and in part this Group's involvement was a response to the requirements in the Members' Charter on community engagement.

This year, Council Management Team (CMT) is considering these proposals on 3 July to ensure the widest possible Council engagement with the Week.

The Lord Mayor has already been consulted on her involvement and the participation of the Civic Party. Indeed, the Lord Mayor expressed considerable interest in lending her support to as many initiatives as possible, particularly since this chimes with one of her ambitions, in her civic year, to promote democratic engagement with the wider community, including the BME community in York. The Lord Mayor, as the constitutionally named 'first citizen of York', is in a primary position to engage York residents with democratic traditions and rights.

Planning Ahead

Future Developments Impacting upon Democratic Engagement

5. Events in 2013 can be used as a lead in to both 2015 and 2018. The next two years can be used for the events to highlight the local council elections in 2015 by beginning to introduce the notification to the public that anyone can stand for election and by helping to make the decision making process and role of Councillors more transparent.
6. In 2018 the **centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918** will occur, when the universal voting for men and for women over the age 35 was introduced.
7. In 2015/16, subject to the Council achieving a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Mansion House will undergo major redevelopment of its kitchens and facilities, to

enable the public display of an important civic collection. The refurbished House can be at the centre of future programmes for the Week in terms of providing a range of opportunities to engage our community in the democratic tradition.

Planning for 2013

8. A project plan for Local Democracy Week (see Annex A) is in place to ensure the timescale and arrangements are manageable. The Head of Civic & Democratic Services will oversee the planning of the events with assistance of the Electoral Services Manager who will look after the daily administration with the support of staff from both services.
9. Where activities and events are done with other teams outside of the service area, the Electoral Services Manager will liaise with the team directly.
10. Publicity will begin in August 2013 to ensure saturation is achieved for the start of October, with support from the Communications Team.

Suggestions for Events in 2013

11. The following outline programme has been developed to date:

Event	Target audience	Details	Involvement
School Council	Primary School children	A budget session in the Council Chamber with the Lord Mayor in the chair, for school councillors to debate a pretend budget.	Lord Mayor, Democracy, Electoral Services and relevant schools
Question Time	Public	A Question Time for the public to put questions to an invited panel. Questions submitted in advance. Held in 2012 at the	Democracy, Electoral Services and invited stakeholders.

		University of York with Colin Mellors as Question Master	
The Leader Listens	Primary or Secondary School Children	The Leader of the Council, hosts a question session from panel of school councillors from the primary schools in York, the schools could nominate four school children and a teacher to attend. Option for different sessions for secondary school or students to have question session.	The Leader, Democratic Services, Electoral Services and relevant schools
Work Shadowing	Secondary School or York College	A chance for one school pupil to shadow a Cabinet Member (or Group Leader) for the day, including attending (non-sensitive) meetings and other activities. Consideration to arranging meeting on the specific day with the Leader, Chief Executive, senior officers and other stakeholders	Cabinet Member, Group Leaders, Democratic Services.
Lord Mayor for the Day	Primary or secondary school	A chance for a young person (possibly from MIND or through York CVS) to shadow the Lord Mayor and Civic Party for a day.	The Lord Mayor, Sheriff, Civic Services and Mansion House, Guildhall & Civic Services Manager
Schools Poster Competition for LDW	Primary & secondary	Posters to be displayed in Mansion House in advance of & during the week. Lord Mayor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member to choose a winning poster & runner-	Lord Mayor Deputy Leader Cabinet Member Mansion House & Guildhall Manager Jill Hodges?

		up to represent the LDW 2013	Democratic Services
Launch Certificate in Local Government & Democracy	Councillors Mature students Prospective candidates	This accredited course run by University of York is offered, starting in LDW to give individuals the skills, experience & understanding of our democratic tradition	Head of Civic & Democratic Services University of York (Lesley Booth)
Service Voter Registration	Military personal	Electoral Registration staff to attend Imphal Barracks to encourage serving military personal to undertake Service Voter Declarations.	Electoral Registration and Imphal Barracks.
The Youth Council speaks!	Councillors Public	The Youth Council will outline their role and key issues affecting young people in York at a pre Council seminar in October, in the week running up to Local Democracy Week. If the meeting is webcast to the public that will provide an opportunity for the Youth Council's views to be aired publicly.	Councillors Sarah Nicolson Youth Council Deputy Lord Mayor
Lord Mayor – Open Question & Answer Sessions	Public	An opportunity to reach out to the BME community and hold periodical Q&A sessions at the Mosque and other venues across the city, including Community Centres. The Lord Mayor would respond to questions about the role of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.	Lord Mayor Democratic Services

Options

- Members of this Steering Group have the option to comment upon the proposed programme.

Analysis

Launch of Certificate in Local Government and Democracy.

13. An accredited course designed by City of York Council Democratic Service Team and the University of York. The course is open to anyone interested in the role of Local Government and Democracy, both members of the public, current elected representatives and prospective candidates for future elections to local government.
14. The course consists of a number of modules that last for eleven weeks each term and include contact with the tutor. The modules are as follows:

Title	Start Date	No of weeks	End date	Time
Civic History of York 2013/14	03/10/2013	11	12/12/2013	5.30-7.30pm
Governance and the Role of the Councillor 2013/14	16/01/2014	11	27/03/2014	5.30-7.30pm
Understanding Social Need 2013/14	24/04/2014	11	03/07/2014	5.30-7.30pm

Upon successful completion of the course, the 'student' will have a solid grounding on local government operations, the needs that local government has to meet and the varying roles we individually have in getting involved in the work and delivery of local Council services.

In addition, the course is well suited to anyone interested in standing as a candidate in the 2015 local elections.

Local Democracy Week is an ideal build up to promote this groundbreaking qualification and opportunity

School Council

15. An event that involves both a morning session with the Lord Mayor in the Mansion House and an afternoon session held in the Council Chamber.

It is aimed at primary school age School Councillors, invites are sent to all schools and in the previous two years six schools have taken the offer of attending. Both were very successful.

The Mansion House event is designed to inform the School Councillors on the role of the Lord Mayor and the links the Civic Party have with the history, governance and traditions of the City of York.

For the afternoon session in the Council Chamber, the Lord Mayor acts as the Chair of the meeting with the School Councillors debate mock council budget decisions (in chocolate gold coins) and allocate funding to the key services, with a chance to provide one extra child related service. There is also a mock ballot on the choices allowing the School Councillors to experience two ways of voting, by show of hands and then by secret ballot using ballot papers.

The events would last for up to two hours per session.

Question Time

16. It is proposed to hold a Question Time session, following on from the inaugural one held in 2012 at the University of York.

This time, it is suggested that it be held at West Offices to allow any member of the public to attend; good advance publicity will be essential for its success. This will provide access to our Award winning building as the future home of democracy in York and enable panellists to be sourced from not just elected members but partners including CAB, CCVS, NHS, Student Union bodies etc.

Last year the Panel was expertly chaired by Colin Mellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Business and Community and ideally he would be approached again to act as Question Master.

Only questions submitted in advance will be permitted, to ensure the balance of the subjects is fair, equitable and appropriate to the occasion.

The event will last for no longer than 90 minutes.

The Leader Listens

17. An opportunity for a panel of primary and/or secondary School Councillors to meet with the Leader or Deputy Leader, to ask question relevant to the issues faced by school children.

This is dependant on diary commitments and the willingness of the Leader to participate.

Invites would be sent to all primary and secondary schools with a limit of three School (or Youth) Councillors and one or two teachers per school. It is anticipated that not all schools will be represented.

Questions would be submitted in writing in advance, with the option of the child asking their question directly at the session. Ideally a senior manager would host the session.

The event would be held in West Offices and would last for up to two hours.

Work Shadowing for a Day

18. An opportunity for a secondary school or York College/Student student to shadow a Cabinet Member or Group Leader for a day. Alternatively, the offer could be made to a current member of the Youth Council.

The aim is to show a young person who is interested in Democracy and Local Government, what an elected leader undertakes in a normal day.

This event is one that would require a Cabinet Member or Group Leader to structure a whole day's commitment around what the young person could attend. Ideally with the day involving meetings and events with other Elected Members, the Chief Executive, Directors and other Senior Managers, or external partners.

Such a structured day would provide a very strong impression of the role the Member has in the decision making process.

Cooperation of Cabinet and Group Leaders would need to be sorted by the end of June, by the end of July the actual day

identified in October to allow time to be planned in diaries of all those involved and to guarantee the young person has access to as many people as possible on the day.

A designated Democracy Officer would be available on the day to chaperone the young person when needed. Including the meet and greet, lunch arrangements, tour of the building and for those times the Cabinet Member or Group Leader was not available.

The manner to select the young person can be from a competition (such as a poster competition as detailed in 6.7) among all secondary schools or York College, or by nomination by a teacher or tutor.

Lord Mayor for the Day

19. An opportunity for a young person to join the Lord Mayor for a day, attending events and undertaking activities with the Civic Party.

An ideal day for the young person to shadow the Lord Mayor would be a day where there is events to attend both in the Mansion House and at external events, experiencing the role the Civic Party play in the tradition and local governance of the City of York.

Lord Mayor Question & Answer Session(s)

20. The Lord Mayor is willing to hold a series of Q&A sessions, as a build up to the Week and continuing beyond. These to be held at various venues across the city, including The Mosque and community centres, to reach out to communities and clarify the role of the Lord Mayor and Councillors in Council decision making.

Schools Poster Competition

21. To publicise the events of Local Democracy week, a poster campaign based up on design submitted by a young person from either a primary or secondary school (or both) could be key.

Early contact with schools, from July 2013, would be achieved with the invite to all head teachers for school children at their school to submit a poster, which they believe 'summarises what "Local Democracy in York " is about'

The prizes for the winning design, could be either becoming the *“Lord Mayor for the Day”* or *“Work Shadowing for a Day”* as detailed above. Also, the winning school could have a tour of both the Guildhall and West Offices to show them how the role of Local Governance is ever changing, from the older ways of decision making to the new style of open working.

The winning design would be used as the poster to be distributed from September to publicise the Local Democracy week around the city.

Service Voter Registration Day

22. In previous years, Electoral Registration staff and the Electoral Commission have attended registration drives at Imphal Barracks to encourage serving personal to register to vote.

The Ministry of Defence does promote Local Democracy Week among units and in 2011 the 2nd Signals invited staff to give a short informal talk on why service personnel should register to vote. This was supported by the Electoral Commission and there was an increase in Service Voter Registrations.

Similar sessions can be arranged for 2013, and to provide more publicity the event could include a visit by the Lord Mayor to provide press interest, depended on the relevant military unit permitting the event and visit.

Such a publicised event could encourage other serving personal to enquire about the special registration arrangements, from such establishments as Strensall Barracks or Linton upon Ouse.

Implications

23. There are resource implications associated with the delivery of activities supporting the Week. Costs for publicity and arranging some of the planned activities are minimal and will be met from within existing budgets. Staff time to develop and support the initiatives will be provided by Civic & Democratic and Electoral Services.

Target audience

24. The Local Democracy week is an attempt to give people a better understanding of how local democracy works and what their role in the local community can be.

This can be achieved by experiencing and learning about how the City of York Council works and having an opportunity to meet councillors.

Extra efforts are made to involve young people, especially to:

- Encourage young people to voice their opinions on issues that matter most to them.
- Raise the profile of local democracy and the role of the Mayor and Councillors.
- Encourage more Councillors to get involved in youth participation and to support the young people of the area.
- Raise awareness on elections and how to vote.

This year, extra efforts are also being made to specifically reach out to wider communities, including the BME community.

Publicity

25. With the support of the Communications Team from August there will be a series of publicity events, that will include:

- Press releases for both the week of Local Democracy and individual events
- Poster campaign on all public noticeboards
- Regular Twitter notification
- Website notification with a webpage active from September
- Invites sent directly to all head teachers of primary and secondary schools.

Recommendations

26. Members are asked to consider and comment upon the proposed programme of activities for Local Democracy Week 2013, so that the necessary arrangements to put this in place can proceed.

Reason: To enable arrangements to be made for Local Democracy Week 2013.

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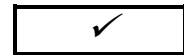
**Report
Approved**



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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

Annex A – Project Plan