

WORK PLAN THEME PROJECT BRIEF

Review Title

Local Democracy in Cheltenham – young people's involvement

Project Sponsor

Cllr Zoe Forbes

The Project Team (suggested)

Cllr Zoe Forbes
Cllr Anne Regan
Cllr Diana Hale
Arran Dyde Policy & Consultation Officer
Rosalind Reeves Democratic Services Manager
Kath Chamberlain Community Partnerships Manager
Other officers and councillors to attend as required.

Timetable for the Review

Terms of reference agreed on 12 September 2005
Commence review in September 2005
Interim report to be brought to the 1 December 2005 meeting
Prepare draft final strategy by 8 June 2006

Background

A report on the Best Value Review into 'Elections and Citizenship' was taken to Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 April 2005. The report gave an update on the present position and provided an improvement framework around four focal points: management of elections, inclusive citizenship, working with partners to improve active citizenship and registration of electors.

At the Overview & Scrutiny meeting on 9 June 2005, it was agreed that a review of local democracy coming out of this Best Value Review was something that the committee could take on as part of its work programme for 2005-2006. A working group was set up and met on 3 August 2005 to start to scope out the principles of the review, and to make some initial proposals for actions based on what is already being delivered as well as what else could be included.

At this scoping session it was decided that, whilst there are real challenges around democracy that face many groups in Cheltenham (including BME communities, disabled people and socially-excluded people), it would be more realistic in terms of available resources to focus on one group at a time, starting with young people.

There are two other reviews being developed by the Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee, on children and young people's services and promoting disability equality. There are clear links that can be made between the children and young people's services review and this review, and there may be possible areas for joint working to avoid unnecessary duplication. The 2004 Children Act "Every Child Matters" has implications for local democracy. One outcome under 'Make a positive contribution' states that children and young people should:

Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment

Outline Terms of Reference

Aim

To identify specific actions that will increase young people's participation in local democracy, giving maximum impact from limited resources.

Objectives

- To progress and start to move forward the recommendations from the Best value Review in accordance with the outcomes of the recent scoping exercise;
- To identify specific actions which will increase young people's participation in local democracy;
- To identify projects, many of which may be happening already, which can be implemented in the short-term with minimum impact on officer and councillor time;
- To identify projects which can be implemented in the medium term and recognise the resource commitments required to deliver them;
- To identify and start to plan longer-term cultural change and the challenges this will bring.

Scope of the Review

The review will have the following components:

A further working group session to develop actions that can be delivered in the short term with little or no impact on existing resources; actions that can be delivered in the medium term and associated resource implications; and identification of how a longer-term cultural change can be implemented and what action and resources will be required.

Relevant officers will be invited to meetings on specific issues to share expertise.

Teachers will be invited to attend meetings to discuss issues and ideas for action where appropriate. This could particularly follow on from Local Democracy Week.

Young people will be invited (through schools, community centres and the youth council) to attend meetings to give their opinion on the issues and proposals put forward.

The review will take place in conjunction with the children and young people's services review.

All members of the Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be kept informed of developments through interim reporting, as will the Cabinet portfolio holders for Built Environment and Democracy, and Health, Wellbeing and Economy.

Local Democracy Week

LDW is one project that is already happening, but there are a number of areas that this review can focus on around making it a more effective event through a more structured involvement of councillors, and a consideration of the longer-term outcomes that could emerge from the event.

Two key areas will be evaluation and follow-up work. These areas will look at how well the LDW events run at present, and whether better use can be made of officer and councillor time; and following up the activities with students to monitor whether LDW has had a positive influence in getting them more involved in local democracy.

There are also a number of new projects that could be developed, many of which will need officer and especially councillor commitment.

Expected Outcomes / Issues

The main outcomes of the review are as follows:

- Identify solutions which may enable young people to become actively engaged in local democracy through improved understanding of its relevance to them and how they can make a difference through the local democracy process;
- Identify solutions which may enable young people to become active community members through contributing to their communities in a range of ways;
- Identify solutions as to how young people contribute to the local democratic process at a variety of levels;
- Over a longer-term, identify solutions to increase young people's turnout at elections.