

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee -**  
**3rd April 2006**  
**Local Democracy Review**  
**Report of the Assistant Director Policy and Performance**

**1. Executive Summary and recommendation**

**1.1 The issue**

**1.1.1** The terms of reference for this review was agreed at O&S on 9 June 2005. At a subsequent scoping session it was agreed by a review steering group to focus primarily on the involvement and engagement of young people in the local democratic and political process. The review is project-based and, given resource constraints, concentrates on identifying realistic actions that can be carried out to increase young people's understanding of and participation in local democracy.

**1.1.2** This report is to update the Social and Community O&S Committee on progress made.

**1.2 I therefore recommend that:**

**1.2.1 The committee considers this report and the projects proposed and feed back any comments to the chair of the review group.**

**1.3 Summary of implications**

**1.3.1 Financial** A budget bid of £2500 was approved to fund one of the projects identified (production of a DVD, see 2.5 for details)

**1.3.2 Legal** None identified

**1.3.3 Human Resources** Many of the projects identified will involve officer and/or councillor time.

**1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities**

**1.4.1** Corporate plan priority 5E – *We will explore ways of encouraging citizenship.* There is also action 5.5 in the draft 2006-2007 business plan under priority 5E, increasing the involvement of young people in local democracy by producing a CD-ROM about the council for schools to use.

#### 1.4.2 Community plan priority *Making it happen* – ‘Engaging with young people’

### 1.5 Statement on Risk

1.5.1 No risks identified, although there may be child protection issues with some of the proposed projects which will be assessed before the projects commence.

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## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This review has emerged from an Elections and Citizenship review that was concluded in April 2005.
- 2.2 The review into local democracy (young people) is one of three reviews taking place on behalf of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It focuses on how young people engage with the local democratic process, and ways to increase their understanding and participation.
- 2.3 Membership of the review steering group can be found in Appendix A
- 2.4 An initial scoping session took place in August 2005 where it was agreed to focus the review on identifying realistic projects that could be delivered in the short-term with minimal resource implications.
- 2.5 Six key areas were identified where actions could be implemented: Local Democracy Week, local democracy events, schools activities, councillor information, University Fresher’s Week, and MAD Young people’s council. A number of potential projects were identified under each key area and taken back to the O&S steering group.
- 2.6 Nine projects were initially earmarked as offering a low cost-high impact benefit:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Continue to develop activities for the all-day sixth form event on the Friday of Local Democracy Week (LDW) every year.	The sixth form event in 2005 was the most successful so far and introduced the political speed dating activity. It will continue to be run in 2006 and beyond, with new activities being introduced where possible.
Hold events for secondary school students during LDW.	This is something that will be explored nearer the time. Certainly there seems to be good interest from secondary schools that are keen to supplement citizenship studies with activities of this nature.
Send schools the agendas and invitations to full council meetings.	Further investigation to be carried out.
Councillors to visit local schools as part of the citizenship curriculum.	At least two councillors are already visiting local schools to talk about the council and about local democracy.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Develop a DVD/CD-ROM about the council and about local democracy and send to schools.	£2500 has been secured in the 2006-2007 budget for this project. Initial discussions have taken place with a local media agency, and a procurement process has begun with specifications sent to four companies inviting quotes for the work. It is anticipated that the DVD/CD-ROM will be started after the local elections in May and be ready sometime mid-to-late June.
Update and refresh councillors' existing web pages.	This was seen as more cost effective than being involved in the <i>councillor.info</i> project. Initial discussions have taken place with the business analyst team in ICT, and work is currently underway looking at revamping the website which may delay this project. Nothing will be started until after the elections.
Have a CBC stand at Fresher's Fair week.	Further investigation to be carried out.
Produce an information leaflet informing students how, when and where to vote/proxy vote in Cheltenham.	Further investigation to be carried out. MAD suggested something on the university internet may be more effective than 'just another leaflet'. Posters are being produced which will encourage young people to vote in the forthcoming election in May.
Hold regular consultation sessions on council matters with MAD Youth Council at Grosvenor Hall ( <i>added after consultation with MAD on the proposed projects – see 4.2</i> )	MAD Youth Council in favour of this project. One meeting has already taken place consulting the youth council on this review.

- 2.7** A budget bid was made for £2500 to fund the production of a CD-ROM and purchase some display materials for the Fresher's Fair project. In order to maximise the cost effectiveness of this budget we are combining the production of the CD-ROM with the production of a community plan/local development framework DVD funded from the Planning Delivery Grant budget.
- 2.8** Some councillors are already making visits to schools and giving talks about the council and about politics in Cheltenham. The production of a CD-ROM could act as a useful introduction to any visit, but also as a stand-alone study aid.
- 2.9** A few of the projects will not be started until after the local elections in May 2006. This is partly due to the period of purdah, but also to the potential for a change in councillors.

### **3. Consultation**

- 3.1** An O&S steering group was set up comprising of Councillor Mrs Hale, Councillor Mrs

Regan and Councillor Forbes. The AD Policy and Public Performance, Democratic Services Manager and Community Partnerships Manager have also been involved.

- 3.2** The six key areas and associated projects were taken to MAD Young People's Council in January 2006 to get feedback on the proposals. The feedback was useful and gave an insight into what approach might work better with each project.

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## **Background Papers**

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<b>Accountability</b>	Councillor John Morris
<b>Scrutiny Function</b>	Social and Community O&S

## Appendix A

### **Membership of the local democracy review steering group:**

Councillor Forbes (Chair)  
Councillor Mrs Hale  
Councillor Mrs Regan  
Jane Griffiths, Assistant Director Policy and PR  
Arran Dyde, Policy and Consultation Officer  
Kath Chamberlain, Community Partnerships Manager  
Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager