

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Special Council Meeting 2008 26th June 2008

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Members consideration of a proposal for the Special Council Meeting 2008.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make appropriate arrangements for the 2008 Special Council meeting on the lines set out in section 2 of the report, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and other Group Administrators as necessary.**

- (3) That a progress report be submitted to Council Business Committee in September setting out further details of the proposed event and any financial implications.**

1.0 Introduction

It was agreed at the last Council Business Committee that the 2008 Special Council meeting would take place on 22nd October 2008 at the Platform.

The Head of Democratic Services was requested to canvas Members, Directors and Service Heads on possible themes for the meeting and the one particular issue that arose was the development of a 'Children and Young People Engagement Strategy' for the Council.

Currently the Council does not have any guidelines, protocols or cohesion in how or if to involve children and young people in any of its services. There are a number of factors that need consideration when deciding what is needed and it is proposed to produce a comprehensive 'Children and Young People Engagement Strategy' to provide clarity in the who, why, what and how of involving children and young people and ensure that the Council has a consistency and quality in its approach. By developing a shared understanding of what 'engagement', 'involvement' and 'participation' mean the Council will then be in a position to develop a menu of opportunities for involving children and young people in the future.

2.0 Proposal Details

It is suggested that the participants would be invited from local school councils, the Youth Council, Lancaster & Morecambe College in the first instance. However, at this stage there is the possibility that not all schools will give permission for pupils to out of school for the day.

The day of the Special Council meeting would be split into two parts, the morning would involve young people who would undertake work to present to Council in the later in the day. Young people will explore their conceptions of the Council and how they feel communication between the Council and young people could be improved.

In the afternoon, Councillors will attend and the young people will act as facilitators with Members being the participants in a number of workshops.

The information and evidence that is gathered at this event would then be used to develop the Council's Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy which is one of the stated elements of the Council's Children and Young People Plan, implementation of which is a key corporate priority. Council will formally make a recommendation on this at the end of the event.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

To provide a forum for dialogue between elected members and young people from across the district. It is envisaged that this will be the beginning of regular exchanges of views and ideas.

The day will give young people the opportunity to:

- Meet other young people from across the district
- Explore issues that are relevant to them
- Develop communication, listening and decision making skills
- Gain an understanding of what the council does
- Develop strategies for their involvement
- Practice presentation skills
- Have positive dialogue with councillors

Councillors will have the opportunity to:

- Participate in groups with young people
- Gain an understanding of young people and their issues
- Explore ways of having meaningful involvement with young people
- Make a commitment to developing youth engagement

The event will provide an opportunity for a cross section of young people from across the district to come together and discuss issues and ways in which they would like to be informed, consulted or involved in the services provided by the Council. This is part of the process in developing the Youth Engagement Strategy. This must be led by young people's input, otherwise it flies in the face of the basic principles of real engagement.

Currently there are school councils, a district youth council, members of the youth parliament, stakeholder groups, ad hoc groups, student bodies etc. So, there are a number of existing means of getting young people's views and for the young people to effect change within their host organization. However it is intended that this event

will provide an opportunity for mutual understanding and dialogue between Members and children and young people.

4.0 Details of Consultation

The proposal is being developed in consultation with the Council's Children and Young People's Manager.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

The options available to the Committee are to approve the proposal as set out in this report, to amend the proposal or to propose an alternative. It is important that work begins on planning the special council meeting as soon as possible in order that a suitable and successful event can be achieved.

6.0 Conclusion

It is the view of officers that the proposal as set out in this report provides a suitable subject for the Special Council meeting, on an issue of interest to Councillors, the public and stakeholders and is achievable given the timescales involved.

It will also provide a positive and pro-active starting point to the exchange of ideas with young people as part of the development of an engagement strategy. Involving children and young people has to be more than general consultation and by agreeing to the proposed aim and objectives for this Special Council which in turn will inform the engagement strategy there is a very clear message as to the Council's commitment to the real involvement and contribution that children and young people make to council services.

Work will need to be done to ensure that the event is sufficiently focussed and relates to the Corporate Plan priority outcome to implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At this conceptual stage costings have not yet been obtained, but it is believed that the event as envisaged is achievable within existing budgets. Subject to approval at this meeting, Officers will fully cost the event, and ensure that all expenditure associated with the special meeting is duly contained within the budget available.

The cost of rooms and catering for all Council meetings, including this one, is met from the Democratic Representation budget of £7,000 for 2008/09. Whilst the cost of a Special Council meeting can be met from existing budgets, this is only the case if costs are kept to a minimum. Costs of the equivalent event last year were kept within the maximum limit of £700 which had been estimated during the planning stage. It is suggested that a similar maximum expenditure be set for the 2008 event.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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