

# COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

## Civic Review - Citizenship Panel Thursday 18 September 2008

### Report of Head of Democratic Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To give further consideration to the proposal to establish a Lancaster City Council Citizenship Panel and Citizenship Awards Scheme.

This report is public.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**That no further action be taken with regard to the proposal to set up a Citizenship Panel and the Head of Democratic Services be asked to consider alternatives ways of introducing a Citizens' Award Scheme.**

##### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the implementation of the Civic Review undertaken by Overview & Scrutiny in October 2006, the Council Business Committee at its meeting on 15 November 2007 agreed to the establishment of a Lancaster City Council Citizenship Panel which was to comprise the Mayor, the Father/Mother of the Council and 9 Members of the public over the age of 11 plus the Chairman of the Council Business Committee as a non-voting Member.
- 1.2 Although the detail had not been agreed, the stated purpose of the Panel was to support the Mayoralty to undertake the following: -
  - Promote citizenship through organising visits to schools, clubs etc.
  - Assist with the organisation of Local Democracy Week.
  - Assist with the preparations for the centenary celebrations in 2009.
  - Run the Citizenship awards.
  - Promote the Mayors Charity and assist the Mayor with fund raising events.
  - Assist in the organisation of Mayor Making and Civic events.
  - Assist with developing the Civic role.
- 1.3 On 04 February 2008 a Press Release was issued asking for people to come forward for selection to one of the 9 places available. An article was also included in the Spring 2008 Edition of Your District Council Matters, which was circulated to every household in the district. Applicants were asked to respond by 14 March 2008 which gave over a month for interest parties to submit their applications.

- 1.4 At the closing date of 14 March, only 7 applications had been received. Of those, only 4 met the criteria of a submission in no more than 50 words. 3 applicants exceeded that limit.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 In view of the disappointing response to the advertisement for membership of the Panel, the Head of Democratic Services has considered whether this proposal should be pursued or whether there are alternative ways of delivering the perceived benefits of the Panel.
- 2.2 The Council Business Committee are therefore requested to consider the continuation or otherwise of the Lancaster City Council Citizenship Panel and some of the suggested options are outlined below.

## **3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

- 3.1 Option 1 is to continue the proposal to form a Citizenship Panel, but with a reduced membership from the public. Reducing the number of members of the public serving on the Panel to 5 would allow the existing applicants to be considered for a place on the Panel, and retain competition amongst those who have put their names forward. It would result in a smaller than envisaged Committee who could meet to consider the way forward for the Panel, and once established could determine what they feel they would be able to achieve as a collective body towards promoting Citizenship in the Lancaster District.
- 3.2 Option 2 is to abandon the idea of having a specific Citizenship Panel, and for the Council Business Committee to consider other ideas for increasing community involvement in City and Civic life, led by the Council Business Committee with input from the Mayor and Mother/Father of the Council.
- 3.3 Option 3 is to re-publicise the creation of the Citizenship Panel through local media publications and in Your District Council Matters with a longer application period in order to seek further applications. This would inevitably delay the establishment of the Panel even further but may encourage more applications than have already been received and the Panel could be established as agreed by the Council Business Committee in November 2007. Should Members wish to pursue this option it is suggested that more detailed consideration is given to the purpose and terms of reference of the Panel as it may be that the lack of clarity contributed to the poor response initially.

## **4. Officer preferred option**

- 4.1 One of the purposes of the Citizenship Panel was to support the establishment of annual citizenship awards to be presented by the Mayor at Annual Council or a special ceremony, such awards to be for those individuals or groups who go out of their way to help others and their community, with possibly a Special Award for anyone who may have made an outstanding contribution to help others and their community beyond that which is expected of citizens. This could however be introduced with the Council Business Committee providing the support to the Mayor in agreeing any awards.
- 4.2 Furthermore it was the intention that such a Panel would assist the Mayor in the task of promoting citizenship within the district, particularly within schools, by visiting schools and clubs in the district and assisting in the development of Local Democracy

Week. This too can be delivered without the need for a new Citizenship Panel. Officers in Democratic Services are separately developing new ways to promote the Mayoralty and citizenship particularly amongst young people and Councillors respond to requests for assistance on an ad hoc basis.

- 4.3 For this reason, the officer preferred option is option 2 above, to abandon the proposal to set up a Citizenship Panel. If Members wish to be sure that the proposed terms of reference in 1.2 above are being delivered by other means, the Head of Democratic Services could be requested to provide a further report giving assurances that this has been done in six month's time.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The response to the initial campaign for applicants was disappointing and people may have been discouraged from applying for any number of reasons. Council Business Committee need to decide whether the intended outcome of the work of the Panel would be achievable with a reduced number of members, or whether there are perhaps other ways in which the community can be engaged into supporting Civic life, so that those who did apply can be advised of the outcome of their application without further delay.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

None.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Should the Panel be created in any form, there will be costs associated with the establishment of awards and ceremonies for which no separate budget exists and any costs would have to be contained within the Mayoral Functions budget. The amount of available budget is determined by the number of other events and financial commitments that the Mayor may have in any one year. It should be noted however that other continuing amendments to the annual programme resulting from the ongoing review of civic events could generate sufficient savings to offset any additional expenditure on this proposal.

### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Civic Task Group Report – October 2006  
Council Agenda and Minutes – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006  
Council Business Committee Agenda and Minutes – 15 November 2007.

**Contact Officer:** Lisa Jackson

**Telephone:** 01524 582170

**E-mail:** ljackson@lancaster.gov.uk

**Ref:**